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SELF-REVELATION  
OUR LORD

J. G. H. BARRY, D. D.



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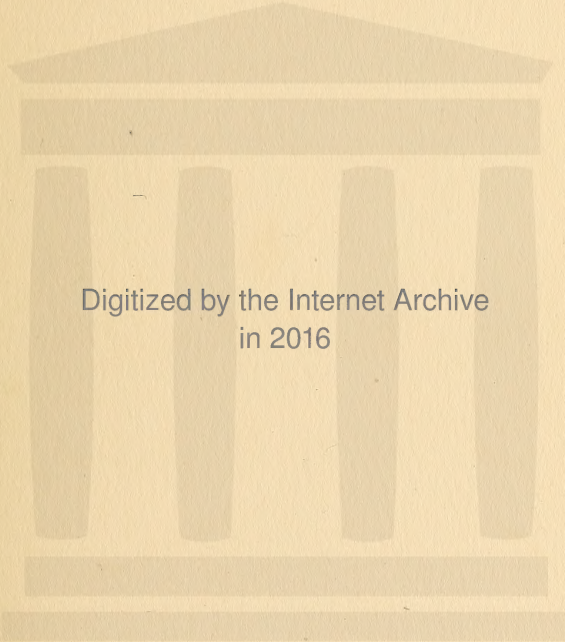


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# The Self-Revelation of Our Lord.

BY

THE REVEREND J. G. H. BARRY, D.D.

SECOND EDITION  
Revised and Corrected.

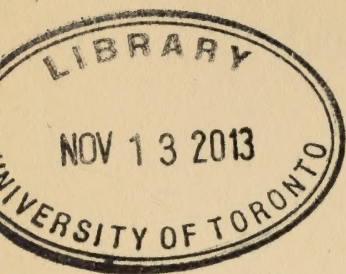
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**1913**



TO THE  
RT. REV. WILLIAM WALTER WEBB, D.D.  
BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE



MY DEAR BISHOP:

I have not asked your permission to dedicate this volume to you: I am presuming on our long friendship, and your constant and unfailing kindness of which I have had continuous experience since our Seminary days. Your permission not having been asked, you will be in nowise responsible for any of my utterances. I have tried in these pages to express some of the fundamental truths of the Christian Faith, and to apply them in the light of an experience now covering many years. You will find nothing new here. I have no novel theories to put forth. My only hope is that by the reading of these Meditations some few souls may be led to a deeper devotion to our Blessed Lord. That is the end of your work, too: and in it I wish you all happiness and prosperity.

I am, with abiding regard and affection,

Yours, in our Lord,

J. G. H. BARRY.





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I AM.

*Let us listen to the Words of our Lord—*

I Am.

*Let us picture to ourselves—*

**A** SCENE that most of us have witnessed more than once—the dying of a human being. Here is one who has come to the end of mortal life. He has always known that this was to come to him, that sometime he should lie dying, and yet for the greater part of his existence he has managed to ignore it. He has put this thought of death away from him, not because it was a doubtful thing, but because it was a disagreeable thing. Even Christians whose theory it is that death is just the passing from mortality unto life, do that. But now the thing itself, death, is here; it is no longer possible to ignore it; the soul is actually passing from the body. It is going—where?

Has the man who lies here any "where" to go to? Has he constructed any "where" that he goes toward with confidence and joy? The meaning of his life has been, not that it should end in the going forth of his soul to conditions unknown and indetermined, but that he should live on under conditions that he has himself, in a way created. There is no uncertainty about death—it comes. There is no uncertainty about the state of the soul after death; it will be what it was before. *We* may not be able to read all the indications, but the man himself knows what, for the future, he has laid hold on; what of sustaining faith he has to support him in this hour. He is going out under conditions that he himself has controlled. What he will meet, is what he has prepared himself to meet.

*Consider, first—*

That the thing that gives certainty to the future and removes all fear and terror from the dying of any man, is the teaching of Jesus Christ. Blot out that teaching from the human consciousness, and what have you left? Do all the philosophic lectures that strive to establish a possibility or probability of survival of death by the human soul give you any comfort? Do all the experimental investigations of Psychical Research, the alleged recalling of the dead to write or speak platitudes or nonsense through

mediums, console you as to the future? All the talk of the probability of a blessed and happy future that people who do not believe in Christianity indulge in, what is it other than poetic optimism? What really gives a note of hopefulness to the speculations of non-Christians is the teaching of Jesus Christ that lingers, as the echo lingers after the voice that produced it is silent, where belief in Jesus himself has died—lingers, because of all his teaching that is the one thing that men would cling to, that they do not perish in the grave. But there is a vast practical difference between the hope of immortality and the certainty of it. There is endless distance, as affects life, between the speculation that we may survive death, and the certainty that we shall not only survive, but that the nature of our future is determined by the nature of our past. It is the difference between those early voyagers who set out to discover unknown lands and most likely perished at the end of a successful quest, because they were ignorant of the preparations needful to meet the condition of life the new land offered, and the modern traveller who, even when exploring unknown lands knows before he starts the conditions for which he must prepare. We go out on no unknown quest, for we have the teaching of Christ to guide us, and shall have the Presence of Christ to meet and sustain us.

*Consider, second—*

The calm security with which the saint faces death is due to his conviction that our Lord is a living Saviour on whom he may confidently lean in this, his last earthly hour. That is, our confidence in death rests in our belief in the Godhead of our Lord. It is not simply that he has told us of the issues of death and we believe him; it is not simply that he has gone before us in the path that we must tread, and awaits to meet us at its end; but that by his divine power he sustains us in that path, and awaits us to reveal himself more completely. Blot out our Lord's divinity and you have by that act blotted out the authority of his teaching and his power to help. We find it possible to rely on him in the supreme crisis, when all the accustomed helps fail us, when the earth fades from our sight and the support of human hands is broken, because we have experienced him as Divine. That calm assertion of his Godhead, I am; I, amid a world the fashion of which changes and whose form perishes, I am, I, eternal, unchangeable, the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever; that is the foundation on which I can rest my life. All the interpretations of Jesus turn out empty illusions, powerless to affect life, except that which declares him God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God. Let us rest a mo-

ment in that thought, prostrating our souls before him and worshipping him who is at once "God of the substance of his Father begotten before the world, and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world." Because he is this, he can take us through death.

*Let us, then, pray—*

For a clearer apprehension of his Godhead. Pray, that faith in that Godhead may never fail us. Pray that it may sustain us in the hour of our death.

May the Infinite and Ineffable Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, direct our life in good works, and after our passage through this world vouchsafe to us eternal rest with the righteous. Grant this, O Eternal and Almighty God, through Thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

. . . . .

As we read our Gospels we cannot help but notice that there is in our Lord's assertions about Himself the claim to a power and knowledge that is more than human. Again and again his words assume that he is in the possession of the powers of the Godhead. And often when this assumption is not expressed in words we perceive it as being necessarily involved in what he says and does. It is not that he does "mighty works"; we have ceased to look on miracles as the characteristic expression of



divinity; it is rather that his self-consciousness is that of one perfectly united to God. After we have studied our Lord's words with sufficient clearness to have become familiar with his forms of self-expression, we are not surprised to hear him say, "I and my Father are one." The acute ears of Jewish critics caught the meaning of his self-assertion and had no doubt that "he being man made himself equal to God." Their charge of blasphemy was perfectly well grounded unless we are able to take the point of view which they declined, that his self-assertion was true. This man rests on God in a special way which is quite different from the way in which the great Prophets had rested on him. Their relation to God was a relation of faith: Jesus' relation to God is a relation of identity. Apologists used to quote this or that text of the New Testament in proof of our Lord's divinity. But we have learned that such a method is altogether too narrow and mechanical a way of treating the fact. The true ground that we find in the gospels for holding that our Lord is divine is not an act or expression here and there which seems almost accidentally to reveal a secret that he is carefully keeping but the very nature of his self-consciousness which is the self-consciousness of God. When his teaching compels him to self-assertion, it is the self-assertion of God.

The characteristic form of this self-assertion is found in these sayings that I am asking you to meditate upon—these “I am’s” of our Lord, as they have been called. They are passages of self-definition, and such “I am” is the assumption of divine attributes. If we make the attempt to construe them as the assertions of a man they become absurd or, as the Jews thought them blasphemous. There is no sense in which one who is merely man can say: “I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven; if a man eat of this Bread he shall live forever.” Still more difficult to make anything of is such a saying as this: “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” We have only to put one of these sayings into the mouth of, say, St. Paul, and imagine him saying to his disciples, “I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep,” to understand the uniqueness of the personality that can make use of such words in relation to himself. And in this saying that we are presently concerned with, “I am”,—“before Abraham was, I am”—there is the ring of divinity—or insanity.

In the Incarnation there is a hiding of the divine power. But it cannot be hid always; there are times when it will break forth. Our Lord acts through the humanity which he has assumed, keeping in check, if one may use such an expression, so much of his divinity as human nature will not medi-

ate. The humanity is a medium of transmission up to a certain point; but beyond that it ceases to be a fit instrument for the divine. What the "certain point" is, we are not competent to say. Our Lord's divinity sustains and vivifies his humanity which by its union with his person is thus brought into contact with the source of spiritual life. But when it comes to his teaching, to his authority, the divine shines out. In his miracles there is no necessary expression of the divine power; but in his teaching he goes beyond man and teaches as man never taught. It is teaching that is mediated through the humanity; but it is beyond the power of humanity to originate, it implies an extra-human experience, the experience of God. His teaching has not the accent of philosophical speculation, inferences as to the mind of God; but is the assertion of direct, self-originated knowledge,—the knowledge of one who speaks, not from God, but as God. There is no shade of suspicion in him that his words are less than final and complete truth. There is in his words no, "I think," "I infer," "I conclude," "I believe"; it is always the direct and simple affirmation of truth that admits of no doubt. The woodland may be as dense as you please, the path you wander through on a Summer morning may have all the qualities of twilight, the closely woven branches of the pine shutting out the sun. But

there will always be places where the weaving is thin, where the light filters through and forms dancing nets of gold on the brown needles of the pine that strew the paths. So these sayings of our Lord—they are revealing lights breaking through the twilight of humanity and manifesting the divine presence. In them we see God.

“Before Abraham was, I am;” he declares his timelessness, his eternal existence, his essential divinity; that divinity that his beloved disciple sets out in the prologue of his Gospel, that those who read might approach the narrative that follows with adequate understanding of the person whose life he was to tell; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” There are those who tell us that such questions are unimportant and only perplex us. That it is enough that our Lord taught us of the Father and set us an example that we might follow him. But before I can accept any man’s example as constraining to my life, I need to know his right, his authority, to make himself an example at all. An example that appeals to me is one thing, an authoritative example is another. But this, it is replied, is an example which we all recognize as embodying the highest and best that humanity knows. All men feel its constraining power and that power is not increased, but the simplicity of its appeal is detracted

from, by complicating it with questions that concern the nature of Christ's person. All men are not able to believe the divinity of his person, but all men feel the perfectness of his example. Why hinder them in following the one, by imposing on them beliefs in regard to the other?

To which this is the plain answer; that it is not true that all men feel the beauty of Christ's example and are constrained to follow it; that they recognize his teaching, considered as the teaching of a pure and holy man, as the perfect guide of life. That teaching is being increasingly repudiated to-day; and repudiated, not as it always has been, by those who prefer a life of sin and throw off the restraint of the Gospel without denying its perfectness; but by those who explicitly deny its perfectness, its suitability to man in our time, its expression of the best that humanity is capable of. The denial of the divinity of our Lord, coupled with the assertion of the sufficiency and binding character of his human example, so far from removing stumbling blocks from men's ways and making it easy for them to unite on a program of right living, has resulted in the repudiation of the authoritative character of Christian morals, and the perfection of the human life of our Lord. After a period of theological chaos during which men have consoled themselves by saying that after all it did not mat-



ter how confused and contradictory our beliefs might be, because we were all, in any case, agreed on the meaning of a right life, and that his creed could not really be wrong whose life is in the right; we have entered upon a period of moral chaos in which the distinction between right and wrong tends to lose all meaning. A man's morals to-day are regarded as what we were told in the last generation his theology was, his private affair. Not long ago a man declined to give up his mistress at my urging, not on the ground that he could not break away from sin, but on the ground that the relation was a perfectly legitimate one and his own private business, with which the Church, whose absolution he was seeking, had no right to interfere. This attitude is typical; and we have not to read very far in modern literature to find it widespread. Why should we, indeed, submit to have all our lives regulated, and our business and our pleasure interfered with, by the teaching of a *man* who lived in Palestine some centuries ago?

The pressing question is not: Did our Lord teach a theology? but, had he authority to teach anything whatsoever? Has his word any binding force? Is the twentieth century, which respects nothing else, bound to respect the ideals of life which are embodied in the teaching and living of Jesus? I do not know what answer those who have been con-

ducting an anti-theological campaign in the interest of what they call "religion" may have to give; but whatever their answer may be, it is clearly not impressing the world, which drifts on to ever more explicit repudiation of moral restraint. The only effective barrier to the incoming flood of a moralism seems to be the reassertion of our Lord's authority to teach, based on the assertion of his divinity. Why accept Christ's teaching? Because he speaks with the authority of God,—of a God before whose judgment seat we shall all one day have to stand. Others have spoken persuasive words out of their own deep spiritual experience of God; but he alone speaks from "the Bosom of the Father." "The Only Begotten Son who is in the Bosom of the Father," he has declared "The Father and the Father's will." He can declare the mind and will of God with complete authority because in doing so he is declaring his own mind and will. His word is final.

It is because of our Lord's divinity, then, that we have confidence in his word. We read our Gospels in a mood that differs entirely from that in which we read any other book of spiritual teaching. We read the books of to-day that are devoted to the exposition of the Christian life with a constant, it may be half unconscious, reference of their teaching to the teaching of our Lord. No other book is

final for us. No other book, therefore, can take the place in our spiritual training of the Gospel. And his authority extends to his work; in that, too, we find an expression of his mind. If we learn spiritual truth from the parable we learn it not less from the miracle which is an embodiment of teaching, a parable in action. Indeed, looking at his work, meaning by that, not this or that act, but the whole process of his living and dying—his Incarnation, his Atoning death, his Resurrection, Ascension, Session—we see that what he says (his teaching in a narrow sense) is strictly dependent for its significance and power upon what he does. His word may, and doubtless does, take us farther into the heart of reality than that of any other teacher. But even that word is powerless apart from his work. It has the same sort of powerlessness as the word of any other teacher. We need to persuade ourselves of the powerlessness of knowledge. It has been the ideal of the rationalistic education to which we have been subjected that "knowledge is power," that the training of the intellectual part of our nature is all-sufficient to fit us to meet the problems of life. We have only to open our eyes to the facts of experience to know that that is not true. How many men do we know who have knowledge, but not wisdom—who are notably unwise in dealing with the problems of life. There

are constant examples of men whose knowledge we should not dispute, who are incompetent to deal with the problems of family life,—who cannot succeed in the discipline and training of a child. The higher education does not exempt men and women from the assaults of passion, or render them immune to pride and covetousness. The accumulation of knowledge seems in no degree to teach the art of living a successful social life, to say nothing of a life of righteousness. There is evidently something vital lacking to knowledge as a guide to life. What is that something? Just what knowledge, proverbially is and actually is not—power. It is power that we want and must in some way get in independence of knowledge—from some other source. And it is not even our Lord's *teaching*, which no doubt gives us knowledge, that can supply the power. His teaching succeeds in setting before us a higher example than any other teaching, in putting us under the pressure of a higher ideal—but what then? Why, we find ourselves confronted with an impossible theory of life. There is nothing in knowledge that can enable it to lay hold upon, and vivify nature, and develop it to a higher capacity of action.

Are we hopeless, then, in the presence of high ideals of Christian living? Are we to find the life of Christ a discouragement rather than stimulus?

Surely there is that danger unless we can find in our Lord, not only an example of a godly life, but also the source of it. It is his *work* in becoming one with us, and thus giving life to us, that inspires our hope. "To them gave he the right to become the sons of God"—a right which is exercised, not by some more or less feeble imitation of moral qualities, but in that self-surrender to his Incarnate action which results in our Regeneration and Sanctification. We do not grow up, out of him, imitating him; but we grow up, in him, expressing him. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"; as many, that is, as are responsive to the motions to the spiritual life, as distinguished from those who respond to the motives of the world. It is they who lay hold upon the eternal life, imperishable things which are the inheritance of God's children.

One of the distinguishing marks of sanctity is that it seeks for stability of life, trying to get beyond the temporality "of the things that are seen," to the eternity of the "things that are not seen." Such stability it finds when it discovers the resources of the sonship which belongs to those who are in union with God. Herein is found a relation which is permanent, and upon which we may build for eternity. The possible acquisitions of character, as we build it up in this world, fall easily into



two classes; those which are so related to and so dependent upon the things of time that they must perish with them; and those which have deeper roots and are so related to ultimate spiritual reality that they will persist while the Spirit persists. There is no permanency in material acquisitions and the pleasures that grow out of them. There is no permanency in such ambitions as are gratified by the possession of worldly power and influence. There is no permanency in a friendship growing out of a community of temporal interests, or in a love which is the product of sensual desires. Any human interests to have permanency must be capable of being, and must actually be, lifted to the level of spiritual action and transformed by drawing their life and energy from God. Such qualities as our Lord exemplifies in his own life and makes the substance of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount; such qualities as St. Paul teaches to be the fruits of the Spirit;—these are permanent and undying. In this world we can love and use material things, we can be absorbed in earthly affections, we can saturate our senses in the enjoyment of the gifts life so richly brings; and in great measure we can do this in helpful and innocent ways; in great measure we are obliged to do some of these by the very condition of our life. But we can, and if we seek another life must, sit loose to such joys and occupa-

tions, realizing their purely transitory nature and the spiritual danger of limiting ourselves to them. They shift and change and pass, as the rolling clouds of the summer sky build themselves into fantastic imitations of mountain ranges, battlemented walls and towering castles, and then melt into the infinite blue of the placid sky leaving but a memory behind. But there are other qualities of life which are stable and undying and only deepen with the flight of the eternal years. There is no world conceivable where the qualities of purity, of righteousness, of love can be meaningless and want their exercise; there is no lapse of time that can render them outgrown. And that because they are deep-rooted in the nature of the spirit, are permanent modes of the spirit's self-expression, are ultimately the expression of the life of God through the life of the spirit.

It is our Lord's eternity, his essential divinity, which assures us of the permanency of the relations that we establish with him. Because he is, we are, and shall be. "Because I live, ye shall live also." No teaching, no example, can establish permanent relations with God, we attain stability *in* him. Apart from his divine authority how can we so much as know that we survive death? or how can we know that we pass out of death, admitting that we survive it, into a stable state? How can we

know that at death we are not beginning one stage more in an endless round of unstable existences? People outside of Christianity, and without any definite religion, make constantly the assumption of an endless and happy immortality as before them; that, however difficult and pain-stricken this world may be, they will speedily reach another world which is immeasurably better. This assumption would seem to rest on very slight foundation. Even admitting that the practically universal human belief in immortality is a thing we may trust to, it tells us nothing of the *nature* of that immortality. The assumption that it must be what we would like it to be is puerile. Laying aside the knowledge of the future that comes to us through the revelation which is the outcome of the life of Christ,—what ground is there for assuming that the future for the human being is anything more than a new “setting out upon his travels,” under changed conditions, to be sure, but why infallibly changed for the better? Or why not a re-entrance into this world to take up once more the weary burden of life? Out of Christ, I see no certainty of rest or peace; and there is nothing that could be more disheartening than to think of oneself as immortal with an immortality that is ever restless, that reaches stability nowhere. It would seem to be just because of the horror of that thought that

the Buddhist thinks with joy of a final state in which all consciousness of individual existence shall be lost forever. It is the splendor of the Christian revelation that it has relieved us of that "horror of great darkness," the horror of being thrown out as homeless wanderers into the unknown. "I am"; that is the word of peace and security. "Because thou art, O, Jesus, I am, and shall be." I do not go out into a dark and silent unknown, but to a land of Promise. "Where I am, there shall my servant be." I can rest on that.

It is belief in the divinity of our Lord that enables us to bear the imperfection of our present condition. We, "endure as seeing him that is invisible." The imperfections and maladjustments that are so evident in the present order would be intolerable if it were not that our confidence in our Lord brought us the certainty that they are phenomena in an order that is being guided and overruled by supreme wisdom working to ends we are presently unable to comprehend. If we had but one brief period of the world's existence from which to study the evolution of life on this globe we could make nothing of it. It was not until geology unrolled the life-story of the earth that we could begin to understand the meaning—the origin—of present forms of life. Now, if there is still much that we do not understand, we are able to

grasp the march of the evolutionary process of the world and life as a stupendous whole, marvelous in its complexity, yet moving on from stage to stage as though to an end foreseen. It is in the light that our Lord's entrance into human life has thrown upon the meaning of human existence in relation to God, that we are enabled to catch a glimpse of a spiritual evolution going on, of which we and the world in which we live form one small section. We are revealed as being a part of some inconceivably great spiritual process, and we are warned by the history of human speculation upon the life-history of the earth not to assume that we can read the meaning of God's whole purpose from the phenomena of the fraction of it with which we are in some degree familiar. Fragments of the purpose are revealed to us, our own duty in the present is made sufficiently known to guide our action, but of the place in the entire purpose of God that such phenomena as pain and sin and love occupy, we are "no fit judges." The only inference we dare make is, that knowing God as revealed in Christ, we may be confident that all things are working according to his good will to an ultimate realization of good. It is perhaps safe for us to think of ourselves as in a relatively early stage in the spiritual evolution of man. When we have in mind the unnumbered years of man's physical evolution, that



time during which he has been in the possession of spiritual ideals and seeking to assimilate them seems brief. And shall it take less time to work out a world-order dominated by the Spirit, than it took to elevate the animal to the perception of the spiritual? There is no need that we should be discouraged or disheartened or driven to pessimism and unbelief by the pressure of the sin and imperfection that we see. For amid it all we do see clearly one phenomenon which outweighs all the rest—we see God in Christ working for the redemption of the world. We are bewildered by the shifting and contradictory phenomena of life, but we are sure of the character of God. When we see some great statesman dealing with problems of government of which we are unable to see the solution we confide in the wisdom or goodness of the man whom we know as the justification of the means he is using, though we are unable to see how they can work his end. In the last analysis we are obliged to trust to the character of our fellows as the justification of their acts. And we are obliged to trust, and are right in our trust, in the character of God as a justification of the world as it is. That we see Jesus is for us enough. Far from us be that pessimistic criticism of the world-order which refuses faith in God and loyal service to him because we are unable to see the justice or the goodness of much that

takes place here. There is, indeed, much in the world that it is hard for a thoughtful man to bear; much that weighs upon his heart and drains his sympathies. We often feel as a reproach our own success or happiness and peace. We often ask ourselves how, if we really care for others, we can endure to be happy. But beyond that is our certainty that God is righteous and that all things in some inconceivable way work together for good. "I am," our Lord says; and in the faith of his divinity we rest secure. "God is love," St. John tells us, and we need not to have been told, for we have seen him revealed in the human life of our Lord. "Clouds and darkness" may be for the present round about him in the working of his will and purpose; but in some far-off eventide there will be light.

In the meantime the mission is upon us to associate ourselves with our Lord in the work of spiritualizing the world. Through us, because we have been made one with him, and given the power that resides in sonship, there is a release of spiritual power. We are vital centers of the energies of the kingdom of God through which its power goes out to the world. That power manifests itself in us in many ways according to our individual vocations and capacities. It manifests itself first of all in us by the transfiguration of our desires. The life of

God's children is most evident as a life of changing desires. As we follow that life step by step in its development, we see the cruel and animal selfishness of youth giving way to the matured unselfishness of spiritual principle. There is nothing more pathetic than youth under the domination of restless, uncontrolled passion, heedless of any appeal of spiritual things. The language of the Spirit is for the present an unknown tongue. One recalls young men and women in whom the drive of the passions seems so uncontrollable, that we can only understand them through the hypothesis of a possessed personality—a personality dominated by demoniac power. Yet one sees, too, that personality checked, controlled, mastered, by the quiet, insistent, unyielding pressure of spiritual principle. One sees the character transformed and moulded into the matured strength of the servant of God. And we feel that the spiritual power brought to bear on that soul is in large measure brought to bear through other human personalities; that the power of God is mediated through us. There is the quiet power of pure example, of life lived simply and unobtrusively in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose unspoken meaning can be understood and whose influence can be felt. There is the power of unspoken love that never ceases to press upon its object with the silent influence of its

self-giving. Above all, there is the power of ceaseless intercession which nets the soul as with filaments of gold and draws it to the feet of God. In this strange world we are none of us independent or separate, but are members of that hidden unity which is the Body of Christ, and subject all the time to the action of the unseen forces of that Body. The threads of the church's intercessions twine and intertwine about the soul; voices angelic, saintly, and of sinners even, mix and mingle in the ever-rising incense-cloud that comes before the rainbow-circled Throne. Prayers go up from altars and from closets, aye, from streets and city squares, which set in motion forces of the spiritual order that penetrate to the soul in the midst of folly and sin. They come, these messengers of God, to the souls of men, calling up memories of the past, evoking the faces of those long dead, awakening the conscience from its torpor, bringing back memories of its childhood's purity, pressing the contrast between the present man or woman and what they once might have been and hoped to be. There are unnumbered points of contact where the powers of the spiritual world touch us awakening in us response to the monitions they convey.

The response to our Lord's revelation of himself as eternal as the "I am," has, we remember, a backward look to the revelation of God which is in the

Old Testament. It is there that God is represented as making himself known to Moses and sending him to the children of Israel with the message, "I Am hath sent me unto you." It is the name of God connected in a special way with the future and the fulfillment of the divine promises: it is the name that assures us of the constant presence of God making good his promises to us. It is the name that calls out faith—our Lord contrasts the blindness of the Jews that saw him, God manifest in the flesh, with the faith of Abraham who saw his day and was glad. Abraham's was the vision of one who sees the fulfillment of God's promises in the fact that they are God's. What God promises is at once a certainty, and faith embraces it as such. And we, however much we have received, still live by faith in the promises of God. The response that we make to God's promises is to act upon them as certain things to which we may fearlessly submit ourselves. This is at the basis of our adoption of spiritual ideals of life, filling our lives with activities that are useless and meaningless if life is contemporaneous with this world, which become meaningful only if this life is preparatory to a life in the future in the presence of God. Whatever fruits humanity may have here and now they are but "first fruits" of a harvest rich beyond all imagining that we shall reap hereafter. But that harvest is



revealed to the eye of faith that has embraced the promises of God. The full significance of the Christian virtues is as yet only visible to faith; of this we may say that it "does not yet appear what they shall be." That is why the Christian life remains a mystery to so many. Why not, they ask, pluck the fruit now ready to your hand? But the answer is, Why eat the green fruit? We are waiting for the harvest, for the fruits that ripen upon the Tree of Life which stands "in the midst of the street" of the city, and "on either side of the river." There are virtues which in this world seem misplaced and untimely and perplexing, which we shall find in their full significance then. They bud here, but the air is uncongenial to them. It is very difficult to make much out of meekness in a world like this, and the portion of its inheritance hitherto is very small. Purity is a perplexing virtue until we reach such a development of it that it becomes an organ of vision, the medium of our seeing of God. It may be said, generally, of the training of the Christian, that what the Holy Spirit does in that training we do not see now, but we shall see hereafter; here in the half-shadows of the brazen mirror, enigmatically; there in full-flowered significance. It is a wonderful thing, this faith of the Christian, no less than a divine gift, which enables us to pursue a way of which we know that we shall



see no end here to sow "harvests" that we must die to reap, to lay the foundation of a building that can only be completed in another world.

But such have been the lives of God's saints from the beginning, from faithful Abraham to this day, they have walked by faith in the Son of God. Generation after generation has gone to its grave looking eagerly to the revelation that is on the other side of death—eagerly, and not at all doubtingly, for they know that "faithful is he who has promised." And as we know that the light that we see streaming athwart the darkness of the winter night must have some source, so we know that the life of faith which has lightened men's steps through the darkness of this world has its source in the world of the Spirit, and that those who follow it will find their home.

And though it be true that we walk by faith, not by sight, yet there is an element of sight in our experience. We see Jesus, the present revelation of God. We see his life, which was like our life "crowned with glory and honor." We see the apparent finality of death conquered by him. We see him in the power of his resurrection passing into the open heavens and taking his Throne at the Right Hand of the Father. And we hear the words of his promise, "Where I am there shall my servant be," "because I live ye shall live also."

And we look out across the snow-bound fields of death to where a light breaks from the world of the Spirit, and hear the voice of his invitation falling on our dying ears, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

## I AM THE WAY.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord—*

I Am the Way.

*Let us try to picture to ourselves—*

THE journeying of the Children of Israel through the wilderness. We imagine them joyfully going out from Egypt in eagerness to reach the Land of Promise, but if we think a moment we know that few of them had so definite a thought of the future as is implied in that. The thing that was foremost in their minds was the fact of their slavery; anything was better than that; so they were ready to follow Moses. But with what continual hesitations and murmurings as the difficulties of the way displayed themselves. We seem to see them on their line of march through the waterless wilderness—stretches of rock and

sand glowing under the pitiless light of the mid-day sun. What heart-crushing monotony; it oppresses one even now to read of it. "And they departed from Hashemona and encamped at Moseroth. And they departed from Moseroth and pitched in Bene-Jaakan". Day after day, year after year, of mere wilderness—the murmurings and the rebellions became quite conceivable. How aimless it must have seemed to the average Israelite whether they moved or camped; whether they stayed few days or more. With what indifference he listened to the trumpet that told him that that day they were to set forward to some station which would be but a repetition of the rock and sand and scanty herbage that he could see now from his tent door. With what hopeless lack of interest he saw the symbol of faith—of a faith that he hardly shared—the priest-borne Ark setting forward on the desert way. To him it only meant the weariness of one more day's march, and when the day ended he was confident that whatever else the crimson light of the sunset revealed to him, it would not be the vine-clad hills and the waving corn-fields of a Promised Land. Think of the weary horror of a life that had ceased to believe and expect.

*Consider, first —*

That notwithstanding the discouragement of the

appearance, these people were approaching the fulfillment of their hopes. Beyond the hills there lay, gleaming in the sunlight—that same sunlight that now, reflected from wastes of rock and sand, blinded them—slopes clad with vine and valleys laughing with corn. It was but a little way to go physically; but, alas! it was so far spiritually. The reason they had not passed the border long ago lay just in themselves. That is the value of such history as this, that it displays the pathetic tragedy of humanity blindly shutting itself from the yearning of the divine tenderness by its unfaith: by its self-willed resistance to the divine guidance closing to itself the road to the Promised Land. It was only a little way off, the unfolding of the divine purpose, the fulfillment of the divine promise; but it was whole worlds away from the spiritual capacity of these men. So they must die and leave their bones in the wilderness, and what had been offered to them would be offered in turn to their children. God was there awaiting them, speaking to them by the mouth of his faithful servants; but they, his chosen, are overwhelmed by the material difficulties of life, and unable to oppose to them a triumphal faith—a faith that can confront the present in a confidence born out of past experiences of God. How is it that the past, so obviously God-

guided, gives men so little of confident hope in the face of the present difficulty?

*Consider, second —*

That our necessity is to find God's guidance in the midst of our present life. We need to guard against the temptation under which Israel fell—the danger of making material success and comfort in such wise the end of our thought that we shall regard the achievement of them as the mark of the divine approval. Nothing more surely closes our eyes to distant prospects and deadens our souls to the need of future seeking than the self-contentment of a comfortable life. Contentment in religion is the mark of lukewarmness. We reach no Promised Lands of spiritual conquest except across the weariness of deserts where we seem often to have lost the way, often on the point of being conquered by our enemies, often at the end of our powers of endurance. We cry out for plainness, for certainty; we rebel against the fact that we have to live by faith; we insist on all intellectual difficulties in religion being removed. We want visible and tangible guidance: "Up, make us gods to go before us; for as for this Moses, we wot not what has become of him". We want to be fed with the solid food of earth—our soul



loatheth this light bread of faith and grace and the invisible presence of the Divine; these are too intangible to support and guide. But they are the only guides there are. The alternative is, rely on them and fare forward, or die here in the wilderness. We must find God here in the midst of the commonness of the daily duty, as a part of the daily routine; we must see him hidden in the ordinary happenings of life. God is One and Omnipresent, and if we cannot find him here, we cannot find him anywhere. The way of his love and of his guidance stretches before us morning by morning—a daily way. We rise to go on our journey from some Hashemona that we have found sand and barrenness, to some Moseroth that will most likely prove as tiresome. We impatiently murmur, Is this the joy and reward of serving God? No: because we have missed the companionship that should lighten the way. We have forgotten that the significance of the way is that it has been worn by the feet that have preceded us, that it is indicated even now by the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night—the symbols of the Presence of God. We fail to see that its dreariness is the result of our letting go of the hand of God and attempting to walk in our own wisdom and strength.

*Let us then pray —*

To remember that God's guiding presence is with us here and now. That we may lift our eyes from the dreariness of the desert to the Divine Light that is always before us.

Jesus, our Master, do thou meet us while we walk in the way, and long to reach the Country; so that following thy light, we may keep the way of righteousness, and never wander away into the horrible darkness of this world's night, while Thou, who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, art shining within us. Through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

. . . . .

As one looks back over one's life in the light of one's Christian experience, one feels that nothing more awful could befall one than not to know God. What barrenness and waste, how like a desert way that has no known end, a way marked by the bleaching bones of animals and men who have perished in their attempt to pass there, would life be. Imagine all your religious experience blotted out; those moments of prayer when you were caught up into the third heaven and saw visions of God; those hours of meditation when the inner meaning of some spiritual truth grew upon you till you thrilled with the joy of discovery

and found your life lit by new light, and your path which had seemed dark and tangled, grew plain as the revelation of the mind of God shone on it; those times of sacramental communion when you felt the love of God encircle you and the Presence within your very soul. What would it mean to lose all that and many, many other experiences that have been yours, and look out upon a world that is at most a creation of an unknown God! To find that behind the whole universe there is perhaps the presence of some Unknown Power, and to have to decipher the meaning of it from the perplexing facts of the material world itself? To feel in the spring sunshine the stirring of a life which is evidenced by the songs of the birds, and the waving of tall grasses, and all the rich bloom wherewith the earth covers itself, and have no power to translate the meaning of this joyous existence! To feel the pleasure of it die away and be replaced by vague forebodings of ill as the clouds gather and the storm comes and the birds' notes die away and brightness passes from the face of the earth! To be in continual uncertainty as to the meaning of life—life which seems to come out of darkness and vanish as mysteriously as it came!

That is what the world was for many centuries; and the reason that it is not that to us to-day is

because God has made a Revelation of Himself. But still it is only some few that the revelation has effectively reached. The world remains in its old darkness for multitudes even now; and not those whom we describe as "in heathen darkness lying," and struggle to evangelize and bring to the knowledge of the Revelation God has made, but multitudes in our own land whom no Gospel has enlightened. This country is filled with people of no religion for whom God in Christ has revealed himself in vain. You know some of them perhaps; they are even members of your own household, they are your intimate friends; and they grope their way through the world without guidance; they try to think that all will end for the best; and they strive to sustain the mystery of it as they may. Or there are people with only a half-assimilated religion, whose minds are chaos in respect to all spiritual things—they also get nothing of guidance in their perplexity, or help in their weakness and need. How pathetic they are, these gropers! When they have to make the critical decisions of life, and no man can escape a necessity to make them, they blindly catch at any straw that would seem to help them, not knowing where to turn for help in their inexperience of God. In the crisis of suffering and loss their distressful faces sadden us; but they are even

sadder in their moments of elation and success, when they glow with a sense of triumph which we know can be but passing. This world in which the Revelation of God offers itself and cannot get listened to is even more pitiable than the world that is still waiting and striving and hoping for some knowledge of God. Nay, one feels that that living world of heathenism, with all its limitations and all its falsities, is a more hopeful world, a world nearer God, than the world of dead souls that surrounds the oases of Christianity in America. The wood and stone that the heathen bow down to, symbolize something spiritually more energetic, something that enters life with a power more invigorating, than the ideals which fill minds of many a western man or woman, who is still quite sure of his superior enlightenment, quite certain that whatever the future, which he doesn't much trouble to think of, holds for him, will be of the best; that when the mists that now hang before it unclothe they will reveal the City of God. One lets one's imagination wander a little freely, and thinks of a fleet of ships sailing out from some port upon the ocean's edge. Many voyagers have already crossed that sea; they have told the tale of its danger and left the story of its safest paths. But our fleet heeds none of these, neither will it take compass—the invention of medieval man, nor re-

gard the stars—the superstition of half barbarous ancestors. But they sail gayly out into the distance which they choose to think unknown; they vanish in the mists of silver, pink and pearl which hang as a curtain over the waters. Who shall prophesy their fate? Is it indeed the surest way to find the City of God, to treat with contempt and scorn those who have been before us in the way? Personally, I get more help on the journey Godwards from those who have worshipped a God, call him as they may, than from those who can only tell us of their failure to find any God at all.

I am ever conscious of living in a world from which God is hidden, where men lead their lives without the consciousness of anything more Divine than themselves. As I watch them in the use of their lives they seem to me to be using life quite as a chance thing. There is visible in them no sense of responsibility. The thing that they *can* do is the thing that they *may* do. I seem to see that this lack of any feeling of responsibility to any power outside themselves is generating an intense selfishness. The reactions of life upon themselves—that they may be as pleasant as possible—are what men are concerned with! The effect of example or action on others is negligible. The lust for mere amusement is as a tide ever rising; and like any appetite, as it grows jaded must be whipped with



stimulants of ever greater intensity. There is a luxury of amusement at which decadent Rome would have stared in wonder and envy. There is a shamelessness of dress, of conversation, of action, at which one stands aghast. And the answer to those who protest is that we have broken away from the narrow views of the past; and the protester is pelted with epithets—Puritan, suburban, parochial. How long will it be before *Christian* is added? Men were first called Christian with an inflection of contempt as the followers of One who died a death of shame. Is the day coming when the inflection which began in Antioch, will come back in New York? We need not be pessimists to think so! it is no new fact in the history of our religion that a society should revolt and abandon it. It is only in the world, not in any locality, that the Church cannot fail.

This spreading feeling of uncertainty and irresponsibility, and heedlessness of restraint, eats deeper into that part of the community which still calls itself Christian, and still preserves some semblance of allegiance to the religion of the Crucified. We have got back to the state of the early Church where the difficulty of being a Christian was intensified by the fact that the profession of Christianity made an open breach with the society in which the believer lived. It has become once

more exceedingly difficult to train a child in the practice of religion, because the practice of religion more and more means isolation—the separation of the life, the amusements,—from the social life of his fellows. We have been dwelling so much on the difficulty of belief as being intellectual difficulty that we have neglected the fact that the greatest difficulties of religion are social. It is not so difficult to believe in a God, as in a God whose service can be combined with the social life of our time. Our intolerance of restraint makes a religion that restrains abhorred. When the lure of the city appeals so intensely to every sense—offers every sense its full gratification—how difficult is the mission of a religion which teaches the control and repression of the senses. When the material is omnipresent and insistent, how can the voice of the spiritual needs of man hope to make itself heard and heeded? How can a religion which has as its basis a demand for asceticism expect success with a community which has forgotten the very meaning of asceticism except as a word of contempt?

All this sounds very pessimistic, I know; but it is not really so. It is never hopeless to face the facts as they are; indeed, the only hopeful procedure is first of all to be clear where we stand—to be clear as to the nature of the problem before us.

I do not conceal that to me the problem seems of the gravest; but it is not therefore hopeless. The Christian religion has more than once shown itself capable of regenerating the ideals and re-animating the moral force of society which seemed doomed. It can do so once again. But in order to do so it must first of all shake itself loose from the cords wherewith modern religious theory has bound it fast. We need to get rid of the altogether human and philanthropic Christ of modern religionism, in whom no Divinity is perceptible; who must perform no miracle, lest he offend science; who must not be born of a virgin, lest he offend "the uniformity of nature;" and must not rise again on the third day from the dead, because a bodily resurrection makes too many difficulties for philosophers. We need that thoroughly supernatural Christ who "coming down from heaven" imparts to the nature that he unites to himself the regenerating force of present God. If we are simply a part of nature, caught in the net of its unswerving laws, how can we hope to disentangle ourselves! It is only as a new power comes to our help that we can look for rescue, that we can hopefully expect to see an open road to God.

To open such a road is the mission of Christ, He brought not "good advice" as to our bearing to our fellowmen, but "Good News" of restored ac-

cess to the Father. In the Incarnation the meaning of God—that meaning which men had striven from the beginning to understand, and sometimes had indeed grasped the fringe of, but more often had grotesquely misunderstood—is unfolded. The Good News of the Incarnation is that Jesus is God; that God is not an abstract conception for the human intellect to amuse or perplex itself with, but that the meaning of God is to be found in the life of Jesus. Here is God's self-presentation. He who sees Jesus sees the Father; he who knows Jesus knows the Father. There is no other way to this seeing and knowing than through Jesus.

"I am the way," Jesus says. He does not say, I make known the way; but I am the way. The difference is very great. It is that we are not called or directed to follow a prescribed path; we are not told to walk by ourselves under however efficient direction; but we are invited to approach the Father *in Christ*, by a life of union with him. Our Lord does not reveal himself as the goal of a journey which is beset with dangers and difficulties, and on which we may quite conceivably go astray. He reveals himself as the *beginning* of that journey, that beginning and abiding in him we need never go astray. The Christian life does not end in union, as the crown of its achievement; it begins with union as the condition of its success.

'Thou art the Way,  
Hadst thou been but the Goal,  
I cannot say  
Thou'dst ever found my soul.'

Herein is that tremendous difference that separates Christianity from all other religions. It is, too, the touchstone of Catholic Christianity which separates it from other forms of religion which assume the name of Christianity, and do, indeed, contain Christian elements. Contrast it for a moment with that conception of Christianity which is called *liberal*. This conceives the essence of religion to be that Christ revealed God as our Father, and all men as brethren. This surely is much; contrasted with the message of other religions it can hardly be over-appreciated. But considered in itself it has obvious limitations. The most obvious is that it leaves us with an ideal that is so stupendous that it depresses. The ideal of life that is involved,—who can attain to! In the end liberalism is compelled to hold that, while its ideal is beautiful it does not matter very much to one's soul's health whether one attain it or no. If one attain it one becomes a better and more helpful man; but one never becomes more. This is so because an ideal has no compulsive force; it attracts, it does not energize. To liberalism Christianity is external

teaching, directing one, not eternal life possessing one.

Christianity does not end in God, it begins in God. It is not the aspiration and fruition of natural powers, but the gift of himself that God in Christ makes to us. The old summing up of Christianity is the truest; God became man that man might become Divine. The way of approach to God is through God himself. We must first be in God and God in us, and then we can and must grow up in God till we attain to the full-grown spiritual man. The Christian life is the bringing into explicitness of the life of God which is implicit within our souls through our union with the Incarnate. Christian experience is not conformity to some set of rules of living, but is the externalization of the Christ-experience with which we have been united. Just as the clay under the manipulation of the sculptor grows to express his thought—a thought that was there from the beginning and which you may watch in the very process of its growth as you look on at the work; so the life of the Christian tends to express the divine thought for it, and you see the birth-process as you watch the process of the unfolding life. The figure is imperfect. It is really as though the clay itself had the thought of a perfect statue and were moulding itself under the impulse of the thought. Something like this we do



find in the world of life where the fertilized cell which is the beginning of each living thing contains the promise and potency of the full grown creature. We can see the process of the creature's growth under the impulse of the indwelling life; but we cannot fathom the mystery of heredity by which each life brings forth "after his kind." Neither can we fathom the mystical union by which the heredity of our "sinful nature" is modified and at length abolished, and the "new creation" in Christ Jesus is brought to birth and maturity.

The way to the Father, then, is revealed to be through ever more completely realized union with Christ Jesus. This is the way to the Father because Christ is being formed in us, our lives are conformed to him; that is, the external life grows into more exact correspondence with its internal reality. This process of expressing Christ is the Christian life—each new and growing virtue of that life being an added experience of the Christ-life in which we are "hidden", one more mark of our "conformity" to him in all things, one more step in the Way which he is. As we watch the life of nature, which ultimately is the life of God, embodying itself at the coming of Spring in leaf and bud and flower, performing before our very eyes the miracle of creation; so we may follow in the unfolding of the life of the Christian the process

of spiritual creation—the first tentative, hesitant appearance of a spiritual quality, its struggle for stability, its acquisition of strength, its power of resistance, its unfolding in the maturity of its growth. Each such conformity of the life to its Way, which is Christ, is a new revelation of indwelling Divine power, and in turn is a new organ of receptivity through which a fuller revelation of the meaning of God makes its way to it.

It is by such steps in the Way that the Christian comes to his goal—comes to know the Father as revealed in Christ. This knowledge can only come through likeness. We know the Father through the Son who alone has seen him. By union with the Son we have acquired capacity to know. As he himself says: “no man knoweth . . . who the Father is save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” And this knowledge is not an external communication of knowledge, as one can tell another fact about God; it is much more intimate than that, and is by participation of nature.

We, then, are in the Way—in Christ; and progress in the spiritual life means a growing control of the life of Christ over our life; not simply a growing pressure of his example, conceived as the typical life, but an inner mastery of our life by his Spirit which dwelleth in us. So the Way to the Father, which is Jesus, becomes more famil-

iar to us, and we begin to understand his own saying, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"—come to understand that Jesus is not the messenger of a distant God, but a revelation of the one God whom for the present we can only know as he reveals himself under the limitations of our nature.

It results from this fact of our being in "the Way" that all that restlessness and selfishness of which I spoke in the beginning of this meditation, appears to us in its true character as the struggle of a nature as yet not perfectly subdued to the obedience of Christ, inasmuch as the will of the flesh is not perfectly merged in the will of the Spirit. Perfect life is perfect correspondence; and we have not reached perfection while there remains a strong tension of the will of the flesh. Our approximation to perfection may be measured by stress of this will and the frequent disturbance of the life. Just as in the evolution of morals there are acts which were once innocent which have become sin as the moral level of human life has been raised, so there are directions and applications of our life's energy which were possible for us at one stage of our spiritual development, but which are become impossible simply because the level of our life has been raised. As you travel from the lowlands up the mountain-side the path

which you follow winds ever amid a changing flora; you pass out of the rank growths of marsh plants and grasses to the sturdier growths of the windswept highlands. The elms and willows give way to the chestnuts and oaks and pines. At each level the life, if less exuberant, is stronger, able to abide a severer stress of the storm wind, able to endure a bleaker sky. It is so in the growth of the spirit. In our religious immaturity what Fruits of the Spirit we show are unstable and need protection, and we still tend to revert to an inferior type of production, as the gorgeous hybrid tends to revert to its ancestral wild-flower. And the fruits of the flesh continue, at least sporadically, beside the Fruits of the Spirit. As we advance to the heights we are disciplined by the winds of adversity, and the storms of affliction, and, if we can stand the process of transplanting to the new climate, we put forth a new strength which reveals itself in qualities of patience, of endurance, of serenity. There is a figure familiar to the Old Testament drawn from the open threshing-floor of the ancients. We see the hard-beaten clay floor on the windy hill-top, and the husbandman tossing the mingled wheat and chaff in the air; and we see the chaff blown away before the wind, while the heavy grain falls back to the ground. So our characters are winnowed by the wind of the Spirit, and the chaff

swept away that the good wheat may remain unmixed. Those who are in the Way travel upward, and must be exposed, as he was, to the trials of the Ascent. They must pass the rock-strewn desert where every stone suggests that they might stop there and sate the senses with the bread of this world which their nature hungers after, abandoning their high mission, and leaving the Way-farer to go on alone. Bread is good and innocent, and they are weary of the "light bread" of spiritual sustenance. They must find themselves mysteriously raised on the pinnacle of the Temple, looking down to the thronged courts below, and hear the whisper of the crowds which suggests a baseless trust in God—Abandon the Way here and cast thyself down; rest in the present attainment, it is enough to impress men with your sanctity; the way beyond is still steep and toilsome. They must stand upon the mountain-top at last, and there find, surprisedly, that what is revealed to them is not the Kingdom of Heaven come with power, but a vision of the Kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them, sunlit, entrancing, enticing, and feel the certainty that all these may be theirs if only they will abandon the Way. It is an appalling alternative which confronts the soul—to stretch out the hand and have all these which it thought it had abandoned and which had never seemed so beautiful as in this



moment when they are ready to vanish forever; or close the eyes to them, certain that when once more they are opened we shall stand upon a mountain indeed, but with no vision of kingdoms at our feet, but instead, find close beside us, the Cross in all its gaunt nakedness. This is the thing that we have chosen. Hitherto has the Way lead us; and we with him must hang thereon.

"I am the Way." he says; "no man cometh to the Father but by me." There is no other way. But as we think of our progress Godward we inject into our thought much of hardness and difficulty which is not there; we let our imagination gather clouds over the future that we shall not have to pass through. For again, remember we are not seeking the Father in response to the command of Christ, but we are seeking him in Christ. The power by which Christ endured the human experience was the power of his union with the Father—"I and my Father are one". And the power by which we live the life of the Spirit is the like power of union with God in Christ. Am I insisting too much when I say again that this is not what we end with but what we begin with? Every step of our journey Godward is in this Way. It makes a tremendous difference whether the child is sent out upon a journey to the other side of the forest with careful instructions as to the



way and the dangers he may meet, or whether his father just takes his hand and says, "Come". But our Blessed Lord took our hands in our earliest infancy, before we knew or heard of him, and said, "Come"—and he has never left us. He never leaves us even when we, consciously, try to leave him.

"I fled Him down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears  
I hid from Him."

That thought of the present, yet baffled God, is one of the deepest of our faith. We gaze on some broken, sinful life, willingly giving itself over to the power of Satan, as it seems, and the hope fades out of our soul. The words that we try to say die on our lips; the hand that we were about to stretch out we draw back again. Here is spiritual disaster, full and complete, we tell ourselves. Here is the total wreck of one of God's experiments. No word or act of ours can be of any avail here. It may be so—no word or act of *ours*. But are there no words, no acts of God, still in reserve? Within that life, we may be confident, there is still a struggle. There Michael the Archangel fights against the dragon. Yes! and a greater

than Michael. There the Way fights and the soul, broken and defiled, is still *in the Way*. He has not given over the battle; and when we have laid down our arms in despair, he still fights on. Perhaps he will win even yet, as he won the Thief on the Cross. Perhaps the tired eyes of the Father, looking once more down the lane that leads to a Farmhouse door, will light up as he recognizes under the rags and dust the form of his son—the son who, after all *is* coming back, drawn by the unseen force of the Father's love. We cannot know in what depths or corners of a man's spiritual nature God can hide himself and wait; but we know that he is there, somewhere, waiting and eager. We are told that in the Middle Ages when the beggar came to the monastery gate—tramp, outcast, leper, whatever he might be, the brother who opened the door met him and embraced him and kissed him upon the forehead and led him in to refreshment and rest. It is thus that the Way deals with us, abiding with us in all our wanderings, *seeming* to meet and welcome us when we return from afar—*seeming*, for it is a divine deceitfulness; he has been with us all the time.

O distant Christ! the crowded, darkening years  
Drift slow between thy gracious face and me;  
My hungry heart leans back to look for thee,  
But finds the way set thick with doubts and fears.

My groping hands would touch thy garment's hem,  
Would find some token thou art walking near;  
Instead they grasp but empty darkness drear,  
And no diviner hands reach out to them.

Sometimes my listening soul, with bated breath,  
Stands still to catch a foot-fall by my side,  
Lest, haply, my earth-blinded eyes but hide  
Thy stately figure leading life and death;

My straining eyes, O Christ, but long to mark  
A shadow of thy presence, dim and sweet,  
Or far-off light to guide my wandering feet,  
Or hope for hands prayer-beating 'gainst the dark.

O thou! unseen by me, that like a child  
Tries in the night to find its mother's heart,  
And weeping wanders only more apart,  
Not knowing in the darkness that she smiled—

Thou, all unseen, dost hear my tired cry,  
As I, in darkness of a half-belief,  
Grove for thy heart in love and doubt and grief:  
O Lord! speak soon to me—"Lo, here am I."



## I AM THE TRUTH.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I Am the Truth.

*And let us try to picture to ourselves —*

**T**HAT scene at the foot of the mount of Transfiguration, when the father of the possessed child whom the disciples could not heal comes running to our Lord for help. See the child lying on the ground, wallowing. Imagine the feelings of this father as he states the case to our Lord. This is his last hope for his child. This horrible affliction had been upon the child from his infancy. He has had to be watched all the time, to be rescued from the water or the fire into which he was cast by some irresistible power. Imagine the anxiety with which the father returns home after an absence—what has happened to the child since he

has been away? He had sought all means of cure, even means that were vainly stupid or useless, in his anxiety to leave nothing undone. This last report he had heard of one who performed marvelous cures looks more hopeful, and he seeks Jesus. But he only finds the disciples gathered at the foot of the mountain. They try to heal the child—and fail. They fail because Jesus is not with them. We always fail when he is away. And the man's hope almost fails, too, at this lack of success. And then Jesus comes and listens to the man's story—listens as he always does, with sympathy and kindness. How rarely our Lord ever complains of the stupidity or the irresponsiveness of men; but he does now. "O faithless generation." And then the plea of the father, "If thou canst do anything"; and the quick retort of our Lord, "If thou canst believe." See the last contortions of the child, and, then, at the word of Jesus, his struggles cease and his limbs grow rigid, and the people murmur, "He is dead." But Jesus takes him by the hand and he arises.

*Consider, first —*

That there was something about our Lord that inspired men's confidence. They felt that to commit themselves to him, to surrender their lives into his hands, was the right and natural thing to do.



When he called men, they followed him. Even men who it turned out in the sequel had not the capacity for discipleship, were so attracted by him that they miscalculated their motives and their strength of purpose and offered themselves to him. Men were convinced that here was one who could satisfy all their needs, and they hastened to bring them to him. This power of inspiring confidence and unlimited trust, is truth. Jesus was one evidently sincere and trustworthy; he could be taken at his word. But more than that; his trustworthiness was not that of one who was honest in word and deed; it was that of one whose knowledge and insight were unerring. Men trusted him because they felt that they were safe in his hands, that there would be no mistake or bungling in dealing with their case. The friend that you rely upon, the priest to whom you resort for spiritual counsel and advice, may be thoroughly honest and sympathetic and eager to help, but there are times when their knowledge or their wisdom fails you. Jesus never failed. Whatever dark burden of sin men brought to him was relieved; whatever idiot child or paralytic friend was laid at his feet was healed. Whatever tangled skein of life was placed in his hands was unravelled. There was never any failure of counsel or helpfulness or sympathy. His person had limitless means to meet every occasion. The

only failure was the failure of man to believe in him, to trust him, to obey him. The only thing he required of men was a limitless trust. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

*Consider, second —*

There are no other terms of approach to Jesus to-day than there were when the father brought his child to him with his pathetic pleading. We, too, must come to Jesus in the same unlimited confidence in his truth and willingness to help. Life, though it is now illumined by the revelation of Jesus, is apt to become to us a sadly tangled affair; our ways run out into darkness; we can nowhere find healing for our possessed children, we have brought them to the disciples and they do nothing for us; and in our perplexity, our distress, our sorrow, we are going away. We think we have tried everything; but there is one thing we have not tried, we have not waited for Jesus. He is up there on the mountain, but if we wait he will come to us; our prayers will draw him down and then if we meet him in whole-hearted self-surrender, he will heal us. Our difficulty, for which we have found no help on earth, will be no difficulty to him. But beware lest we meet him with an "if." Then he can

not help at all. That faith which is not faith, but the despair that is willing to try the last thing that is suggested, will not avail us. We must put ourselves and our need whole-heartedly and without reserve into his hands. Then he will come to us in the power of Incarnate God; then he will heal our lame and our blind and cast out our devils and raise our dead, then will he show us his light and his truth and lead us and bring us to his holy hill and to his dwelling. Life is so plain and easy when once we have trusted in him without reserve; when we cease to think of the morrow, and cast all our care on him, knowing that he careth for us.

*Let us, then, pray —*

That we may not falter in our trust in Jesus. That we may receive his truth and guide our lives by it without withholding anything.

O Almighty and Everlasting God, who didst give to thine Apostles grace truly to believe and preach thy word; grant, we beseech thee, unto us thy servants, to love that word which they believed, and faithfully to receive the same; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

. . . . .

Very wonderful is the universal belief in God. Men everywhere have sought after him and found him. It is comparatively unimportant that they

imaged their belief in God in strange forms; that they divided God, so to say, into a multitude of gods; that they endowed him with their own qualities, and thought that "He was such an one as themselves." The important thing is not that they interpreted their experience of the universe crudely or grotesquely, but that they were so sure of the meaning of their experience, that back of the shifting phenomena of the world they saw God,—saw that this world is not self-existent and that its incompleteness and unsatisfactoriness implied that which would explain and complete it. The simple inference that the uncultivated man made from the world to God is of course unsatisfactory, indeed, childish to the cultured man of to-day. But the cultured man of to-day is the dupe of his own intellectual subtlety. Though we may not be able to prove it, the inference from the world to an intelligent Creator is the only inference that gives the world any meaning or life any significance. This primitive guess, if you like so to call it, has been abundantly justified in that it has kept man in the belief that the world is a spiritual system, and on the whole saved him from the degradation of materialism.

To me, perhaps the most wonderful of all man's instinctive beliefs, that is, beliefs arrived at without a basis of experience, is the belief in his own

perfectibility. All along man has had a vision of human perfection, the dream of a perfect man. Whether he has placed his dream in the past—in some lost Eden or vanished Golden Age—or in the future, as the ideal for which he is working, he has believed that he is now imperfect but capable of perfection. He has found his *present* always unsatisfying, unsatisfying, I mean, as an expression of himself. He might and ought to be better; he has in him the possibilities of greater things. This conviction has included most often the conviction that God meant him to be better, and that his present state spells failure and sin. He expects that sometime his vision of perfect man will become reality. How are we to account for this insistent, haunting conviction, this persistence of the belief in a perfection he had confessedly never seen? I believe it to be the pressure of the Divine that is in man because he is the child of God, made in his image, after his likeness,—the attempt of God to raise man to be the more perfect medium of his self-expression. All nature is but the clothing of a divine thought. And in man that thought struggles to make itself vocal and intelligible.

Thus it was that when God's Thought, his Logos, expressed itself in Christ, man recognized the embodiment of his dream, the justification of his vision. Here was what he had been certain of—

human perfection; one who is Perfect Man because he is perfectly united to God. The instant and abiding fascination of the Christ lies in the fact, we are told, that he is so perfectly, so ideally human. That is true if by being thus ideally human we mean that man's conception of his perfection includes the thought that the perfect man is such, not by the completeness of his animal nature, but by the perfection of his spirit, so that it is the means of union and communion with his God. God is in all men, but attains perfect self-expression in the One Perfect Man who is Christ. And he in turn is the earnest and promise of the new advance for humanity, in that through him, and in him, it is now possible for all men to be united with their Father who is in heaven. In Christ we recognize a revelation, an unfolding, of the meaning and purpose of God.

Before the Incarnation of our Lord there had been a revelation of God. There had been that diffused and indistinct revelation in virtue of which man had become conscious of God's presence in the universe and had sought to learn and to do his will,—that presence that they had felt in flower and grass, in the purling brook and the majesty of the ocean, in the glory of flower-strewn meadows and the awe of snow-crowned mountain peaks: that insistent self-assertion of God which they had



experienced in the restlessness of their moral nature and the trouble of their conscience. There had been for some a clearer revelation in the words of Prophet and Psalmist, men who had declared themselves to have known God, to have met him face to face, and to have been sent by him as the revealers of his will. They had *seen*—but of what God was like there is no report—only of the splendor of a garment of light, of a dim form seen through incense clouds, the gleam of a pavement of sapphire, the passing of a throne borne by cherubim, a voice speaking out of the heart of the storm. But they brought an intelligible message, the tenor of which justified itself to the consciences of men, a message of mingled hope and fear. It was the revelation of a divine purity and a divine justice which was of itself a rebuke to sin; a call to repentance, a stimulant to holiness. It centered about the word *Father*, and called men by the name of children, and thrilled with the love that that relation means. But the Father was the high and Holy One who inhabited eternity, and the awful obligation of sonship was, "Be ye holy as I am holy."

And then came the Christ, and on his lips revelation—the message of the Father—takes a new form and a new accent. We catch the difference in his own assertion about himself: "I am the truth." He

presents himself to us as the embodiment of the truth of God. Here was God, seen no longer through the refracting medium of instinctive inferences, or the interpretation of dream and vision, but presented to man in the only way he can understand him, in an Incarnate life. The character of God is seen in action. Christ does not tell the truth about God; He is the truth. He is not theory but fact. He is therefore able to solve the doubts and unweave the perplexities that cling about men's thought of God. Men could say to him: "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us," having perfect confidence in him. And he could wonderfully point to himself as embodying the knowledge they seek: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

So men, after centuries of guesses and inferences, of blunders and partial success, can know what God is. God is what Jesus is. Jesus shows, not what God is in himself, but what he is to us, which is the thing we want to know and need to know. When we are studying him we are studying the Divine Truth. Men could not be with him, they cannot study him now, without having their thought of God clarified. And there was so much, and still is, that needs clarifying. We feel that the men who passed from the schools of Scribes and Pharisees to associate with Jesus must have felt

that they were passing into a new world—a world where values were altered and stresses were changed, and all things were become new. The pressure of invisible law—law that haunted and dogged men's footsteps that it might catch them in its net—was exchanged for the love and sympathy that treats life comprehendingly and tenderly, and "willeth not that any should perish." One does not feel otherwise to-day as one passes from the lecture room where the existence of "The Absolute" is triumphantly established, or "The Essential Attributes," of God are explained, to the quiet of the Gospels where the truth about God is brought home to us when Jesus says: "I and the Father are one," "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," or, "The Father himself loveth you." That God is the high and Holy One who inhabited eternity, the transcendent Creator, is not denied: but the stress is on the immanent God who is manifested in Jesus. This God is the Great Seeker. In Jesus he comes to us, and abides with us and in us. "We will come to him and make our abode with him." The revelation of God's nature carries us even beyond Fatherhood, for "God is love."

In this revelation which is in Jesus not only is man's thought about God cleared, but his thought about himself. What is revealed to him, first of all, is not the darkness and horror of sin, but the

splendor of his inheritance. Man is the child of the Father who is love. The attitude of God toward him is that which he perceives in the attitude of Jesus towards these multitudes who throng him, bringing to him their sick and impotent and lunatics. He sees God's dealings with him when he sees Jesus having compassion upon the multitude, when he sees him taking little children in his arms, when he hears him speaking the words of pardon over the bed of the paralyzed man. We feel that those "Publicans and Sinners" who followed our Lord, followed so closely, so insistently, so hopefully, because for the first time they were learning that they were not abhorrent to God and outcasts from the kingdom of the future. The love of God as Jesus manifested it was a love for *them*—warm, deep, passionate. They were the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Sons of his parables; and so thinking of God, so seeing God in Jesus, they took hope for themselves, and conceived the possibility of living to God's thought for them. For it is *hope* that leads men to repentance; and when they perceived that God still hoped for them they began to hope for themselves. They were not made careless of sin; they were not less conscious of being sinners, but more. For they now read the truth of their lives, not through the eyes of Pharisaic rigorists, at whose sneers all their manhood revolted, but

through the words of one pitiful and tender, whose very tenderness revealed to them the meaning, the blackness, of their sin. Hatred and disgust repel the sinner; it is only love that draws.

What I want to make clear, is the actual effect of the revelation of God in Christ—what is the impression it has made on human life. The easiest and most decisive way of finding what this impression was is to open our New Testaments. If we attempt a classification of the books of the New Testament with a view to ascertaining *the effect* of Christ, we shall find that those books fall easily into three classes. First the synoptics; that is, the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke. Second the Epistles of St. Paul. Third the Gospel of St. John. No doubt the rest of the New Testament might be ranged under one or the other of these classes, but for our present purpose it is unnecessary to extend the classification further.

If one takes the first three Gospels and reads them over several times for the purpose of getting a fresh impression of their presentations of the life of our Lord, one rises from the reading tremendously impressed by the uniqueness of our Lord's humanity. Here is one in all respects "Like as we are, yet without sin." The qualities we have learned to admire in man are there in their highest potency; and there are others, that per-



haps, we have not learned to admire, but we are sure, as we see them in our Lord, that they are altogether admirable. We are quite certain that here is the ideal of man; that perfect expression of what man had all along felt that he ought to be, that we have already noted as one of the mysteries of human thought. Christ moves on the pages of the Synoptics through all the setting of his life, from its idyllic opening to its tragic close, completely the master of every situation in which we find him. There is nothing tentative or experimental about him. He meets each situation which life presents to him with unfailing resource of thought and action. No crisis is so difficult as to cause him a moment's perplexity; there is no plot of his enemies of which he does not see the meaning at a glance. There is no situation, whether the outcome of human sin or folly or misfortune, which he does not meet readily: no one ever asks his help or counsel and finds him unprepared. And we do not feel that this is a matter of quick-wittedness or of careful training or of acquired insight, but is the natural outcome of his perfect humanity—that we fail where he succeeds because we are defective where he is perfect. We have never before seen perfect man, but we are certain that we see him now—that this is the way in which all men would act if they were perfect.



But it comes to us, too, as we turn again and again the pages of these Gospels, that there is an element in the character and action of Christ which is beyond anything that we can attribute to human perfection. And this element is not simply or chiefly the miraculous element—we can conceive that perfect man would have some such command over the resources of the natural world as Christ displays—it is rather a growing sense that we gain of the nearness and closeness of his life to God. This *more-than-human* element in the Christ is the result of the intimacy of his union with God. Indeed, what we are dealing with is not union but unity. He has not risen through the purification of his nature to union with God, but he is God—he and the Father are one. We could infer that, with some hesitation, from the first three Gospels without the explicit testimony of the fourth.

Turn now to another strand of New Testament experience, that which is embodied in the writings of St. Paul; and remember that the writings of St. Paul precede the Gospels and represent an independent experience of our Lord. In the experience of St. Paul the historical Jesus of Nazareth plays almost no part. I do not at all mean that St. Paul was ignorant of the facts of our Lord's earthly life or considered them of no importance. He indeed stresses as of primary importance our

Lord's death and Resurrection. But I mean his experience is not the outcome of meditation upon the history, but is the result of a personal relation to our Lord himself. The Jesus whom St. Paul presents to us is indeed the same Jesus who was born at Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary; but in St. Paul's experience he is Risen and Ascended and seated at the Right Hand of the Father. The Risen Jesus is central in the thought and life of St. Paul, as one always present to him, very life of his life.

Christianity to St. Paul is a matter of having found the Way, and being in Christ. The "conversation" of the Christian is "in heaven" where his "life is hid with Christ in God." Jesus is the truth of God, and we know the truth "in Jesus." It is our experience of the Living Christ, not our memories of the dead Christ, which St. Paul stresses. To his religion that experience is central.

Turn to another strand of New Testament thought, this time to the Gospel of St. John. St. John writes long after the Synoptics and St. Paul have finished their work. The facts of our Lord's human life, and the facts of spiritual experience which are the outcome of the Christian's relation to the Living and Ascended Christ, are both familiar to the Christian consciousness. What St. John

writes is less a history of our Lord's life, than a meditation upon it. In his writings we see the strand of history and the strand of spiritual experience intertwined. St. John dwells upon the historical facts of the life of Jesus, but his presentation of them is colored by his experience of the Risen and Ascended Jesus. The depth and intimacy of his knowledge of our Lord's mind and thought is derived, we feel, from the closeness of his intercourse with him in his heavenly state. Even St. John could not have written such a book on the morrow of the Resurrection; it is the ripe fruit of many years of spiritual living in Christ. Yet we feel, do we not? as we rise from meditation on St. John's gospel, that this is the truest, that is, the most complete, presentation of the truth of Christ. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." But the seeing and the hearing and the handling have been enriched and interpreted by many years of meditation and contemplation and spiritual appropriation, before they have been written in the wonderful pages of the Fourth Gospel. The writer has not only gained in spiritual apprehension as he dwelt lovingly on the days when, as the disciple whom

Jesus loved, he lived in closest intimacy with his Master; he has not only gone deep, by devout thought, into the meaning of the work that had beheld and the sorrows that he in some sense shared; but he who leaned upon the Master's breast at the Supper, and stood watching his agony upon the Cross, and was a witness to his empty tomb, has also seen the heaven open and beheld the Master whom he had known and loved as an earthly friend, throned in glory, the center and object of the worship of angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, and has been the messenger of the Risen Jesus to all generations of his Church on earth. This knowledge, this experience, this truth, is reflected back on the pages of the Gospel till they glow with the jewelled light of the heavenly world.

As we come back from this imperfect glance at the New Testament interpretation of the life of our Lord we necessarily ask ourselves if there is anything in our own experience which at all corresponds with the Apostolic experience. And I think we can find that this is indeed the case. Any Christian experience that approaches completeness will be found to be as complete an experience as was that of St. John. There is in it a certain intellectual element of knowledge *about* Christ which is founded upon our study of the gospel. We have

become familiar with the history of Jesus of Nazareth, we have learned to see in him the mirror of human perfection. The incidents of that life are part of our daily thought, the food of our daily meditation. We have learned to guide our life by his teaching and to feel that the imitation of Christ is essential to the Christian. That is one aspect of our Christian experience; but if the experience is real it does not stop there. There mingles with it and colors it and vivifies it an experience of Jesus *as he is now*; an experience of Jesus, living and ascended, and through his glorified humanity entering into union and communion with us. This is what we are wont to call our *spiritual experience*, that is, the certainty that we have that we are in Christ and he in us. This certainty of a present action of Christ in us attends and underlies all our spiritual life; indeed there is no need of the limitation, it underlies all our acts. This consciousness of Jesus as the stimulating and directing power of our lives (and we need not in any case pause to analyze an act to find how much of our certainty is due to our memory of his teaching and how much to our Lord's direct action) is consciousness of him as the Truth. The reference of all our lives to him means that we find in him the Truth, and that by that discovery we are delivered

from the bondage of error and are made free with the liberty of the children of God.

This reliance upon Christ as known in our experience lies at the root of our practical, everyday conduct. It affords an ever-ready reference for the details of conduct. Such reference becomes instinctive and almost unnoted to such a degree that often times we should have some difficulty in explaining why we act in a certain way, so deeply hidden in our nature has become the ultimate ground for decision. It is not infrequent to find people alleging purely surface reasons for their conduct, reasons plainly thought of at the time, when it is clear that the true reason was a spiritual instinct born of their spiritual knowledge of the truth. One is confronted with the fact that one does not indulge in certain amusements or luxuries, and is asked abruptly to decide if they are right or wrong. And one finds the decision difficult because one is obliged to shift one's canons of judgment to another plane. One is obliged to put oneself on the plane of one's questioner and base an answer on reasons that one never uses. We find it difficult to translate our *feelings* of attraction or repulsion into the rough and ready *rules* of good and bad. We are not always conscious of the judgment *bad* concerning that which we avoid, or of the judgment *good*, in regard to that which



we do. A law, a rule, a maxim, can be, at best, only a very crude test, and a very imperfect guide. An author cannot always tell why he uses one word rather than another; the rules of grammar admitted either; but he *feels* that the word he used is the right one. Style is a matter of feeling rather than of rule. The painter cannot tell why he heightened that light or put a little more purple into that shadow, but he *feels* that it had to be done—as it stood it made him a little uneasy. You do not see any difference, but he feels that there is one. So in the shaping of our conduct, the choice of our words, the selection of our amusements, we may find it difficult to produce a rule on demand; but we feel that there is a difference. And this difference, in the case of the Christian, is most likely no producible law of God or maxim of the gospel, such as the critic demands, but a *feeling* of the mind of Jesus. Our decisions in matters of truth and beauty and goodness are only partially the result of a knowledge of the teaching of Jesus; they are rather the result of an experience of him. Such instinctive decisions grow more delicate and refined as experience broadens and deepens, and also more difficult to give an account of even to ourselves. But if we can give no adequate account of them, we hold them in absolute certainty, we follow them without any shadow of

fear. We are certain that in such decisions the Spirit of Christ is with us, and that we have his mind. The law may have left us its freedom; but we are concerned only with the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

I suppose that at times we all find that the rules of conduct of morals, that we have learned, break down in this sense—that we find them inadequate to guide life. It is only a life of very elemental experiences that can be measured by rule. It is the fact, indeed, that the mechanical measurements of material things are but approximate: the ideal result we get by mathematics will not quite fit any concrete case. In applying the result to materials there must be some allowance made which represents a lack of correspondence between formula and fact. So in the application of rules to life there has to be an allowance made for the infinite variety of life. The rule is invariable, life always varies. This is the perplexity of the unspiritual person—he finds the rule breaks down and there is nothing to supplement it with. One of the marked differences between the unspiritual and the spiritual person lies precisely here; that the spiritual person has back of and beyond all rules a *sense of conformity*, a certainty of the correspondence of his life with the mind of Christ or of its failure so to do. The unspiritual person has no instinct of

conformity. If I am asked, how this sense of conformity is attained, I should say that it is the outcome of the life of union, the result of living in Christ. We appropriate the point of view, the mind, of those with whom we are intimate. You see this manner of imitation in the child who unconsciously appropriates the gestures, the tricks of speech, of father or friend. There was no conscious learning; it is just a matter of association, of intimacy. The way in which our Christian lives are shaped is, too, a matter of being filled with the Spirit of Christ, and the extent in which his life is, often unconsciously, repeated in ours. I do not mean that there is no need of effort; there is need of constant effort to appropriate the "truth as it is in Jesus." But if our effort is to be successful, it must carry us beyond conscious imitation, it must spring out of personal love which is the true medium through which we arrive at the understanding of another's mind.

I am of course speaking of those things that are subtle and delicate, lying outside the rough distinctions, true and false, right or wrong. I have in mind principally that sort of selection within the allowable which becomes a necessity to those whose mind is to press on toward sanctity. We think of the lives of those who are approaching sanctity as becoming more and more *simplified*.

There is a process of detachment going on within them, which results in their separating themselves increasingly from the ordinary interests of life. The circumstances of their lives may not admit of an exterior separation, but there is a separation of the inner life which becomes "hid with Christ." The essential interests of life become fewer, less and less do they cling to *things*. It is enough for them that they see Jesus, and their interest in their fellows is that they see Jesus in them. Hence the curious phenomena that they have not less interest in the world, or are less given to good works, but their interest and activity is intensified. A St. Vincent de Paul or a Father Stanton give themselves utterly to ministry just *because* their lives are simplified to the extent that they have no interest but Jesus. To them Jesus is constantly manifesting himself in his members, and the service of the members is the service of him. This is the true social service, that co-operates with the manifestation of the life of Jesus in the least of his members and strives that the truth which is in Jesus may prevail in all the dark places of the world. It is not men who are bound to material interests who can do this, but those whose spirit of detachment has freed all their powers, to the end of their utter consecration.

For to see the meaning of Jesus is to see the

truth about this world—that it is the one sphere of his activity with which we are now concerned—the sphere in which is being built the Body of his Incarnate Life. His activity has for its end his self-manifestation in the lives of men. If we have once grasped this there is no danger of our being slack in well doing. This world becomes the stage of a fascinating drama wherein we see the ventures, the victories of faith, and its disasters, too. One's association with the truth, one's sense of personal responsibility, in guarding it, one's sight of the pitiful life of men who so much need it give one that sense of mission which lies back of the Apostles, "woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." The truth of God—"the truth as it is in Jesus"—is the only thing which can bring any permanent relief or comfort to the lives of men. The remedies that we are applying so abundantly and so hopefully to the ills of the world to-day, are merely palliatives. The trouble with the world is that it needs the light of truth to guide it into peace with God. Our vocation as Christians is to let that light shine through us "that men may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven." We must *shine*: it must be impossible to doubt that we, at least, have found the truth that solves the problems of life and puts us in harmony with God. The Christian whose grasp of the truth is vague and

uncertain, whose testimony lacks the note of personal conviction, who shrinks from the open and joyous profession of it before men, is falling far short of the obligations of life which he has received from the truth abundantly, that he might give it freely. We cannot expect the world to be converted to a faith which is constantly apologetic and asks for bare tolerance. It will only be converted to a faith that is so certain that it dares to stand alone before a hostile world.




## I AM THE LIFE.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I Am the Life.

*And let us try to picture to ourselves —*

OUR Lord and his disciples meeting the funeral procession outside the gate of Nain. The sadness of the scene is brought home to us in the words, "he is the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Her bereavement had called out the one human source of helpfulness—sympathy. "And much people of the city was with her." We see them, these good friends, offering what words they could, and where there were no words, by silent looks and hand-pressure, making their fellow-feeling known. How helpless we feel at such times whether in word or in silence. Nothing could

help much while the silent body was borne there before the mother's eyes on the open bier. In the isolation of their grief they would have paid no attention to this other group coming towards the city. Could they have known what was there for them how they would have hastened their steps. Into the midst of the mother's grief, God was coming. God can be so near, and we know it not. "And he said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still." Their first impression would have been one of unauthorized interference; but that would pass as their wondering eyes rested on the face of him "who had compassion on her." The grave kindness and sympathy of his look would themselves show that he was not acting without reason. And then the word of power: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." What can express the glad wonder of the mother's heart as "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." In her heart there was no place for the astonishment and fear that fell on the others. She can have had but one feeling; a passionate love that goes out to her boy which would for the moment make her oblivious to all else, even the presence of him who had brought her child back to life. "And he delivered him to his mother."

*Consider, first —*

That we come to the contemplation of this scene with the knowledge and experience of our Lord that centuries have given. We have learned to think of him as of one who has absolute mastery over all life and death. What he says of his own life, "I have power over my life to lay it down and to take it again," extends to all other lives. He is the Prince of Life. What fascinates us about the story is not so much the exemplification of a well-known truth, as the circumstances under which his power is here exercised. We get used to the thought of the divine power; we never get so far as to grow cold to the wonder of the divine sympathy. This is what is constantly new to us: That the divine power is impelled to action by the divine sympathy. It is the same lesson that we learn as we stand with the three chosen disciples in the chamber of Jairus, and see Jesus take the maid by the hand, and say to her, "Arise." Or when again we stand by the weeping sisters at the tomb of Lazarus, and hear him say, "Lazarus, Come forth." There are but few miracles in the whole Gospel record behind which we cannot read the sympathy of God. The thought that we get is; That the power of our Lord, his mastery over life and death, is a power that is directed by sympathy and love;

that it is called into activity by the needs of the children of men. And we can conclude, can we not? that it is not a power called out by one need here and there, but that it is always being exercised with reference to our lives, whether we perceive it or not. It may have been that the same day another body was borne out of the gate of Nain, and no hand touched the bier to stay it as it went to the place of burial; but none the less the sympathy and love of the Lord went with it, and those who followed, weeping. The great thing is not to see the power of God, but to be sure of his love.

*Consider, second —*

That the presence of our Lord in our lives to-day is the resurrection of dead things. His touch is a vivifying touch. There are in all our lives, dead or dying things; things that range from the soul dead in trespasses and sins, to the discouragement and weariness of waning hopes, unsatisfied longings, perishing aspirations. There are moments when our spiritual life seems stale and flat and meaningless; when the sense of what we have not accomplished over-shadows our positive gain. It is so great a thing to be a Christian and we have made so little out of it. We had hoped so much, and to-day we see our dead hopes borne out of the gate of the city. But if we so will it, they need

not go to their burial. There is one that can bid the bier stay and can speak over them the word of life; one whose sympathy and love lingers over these seemingly dead things and is nearer to them than to our successes, because they heed him more. Perhaps our spiritual life has grown dim because we have forgotten how much it depends on him. Spiritual vitality is maintained only so long as we are in energetic contact with the source of all life. More energetic life is closer clinging to Jesus with the clasp that will not let him go until he bless us. In all our experience, however dark or disastrous, he is there by the side, within the reach of our hands, within the touch of our faith, within the appeal of our needs. He will not pass, if we want him. "I am the life," he says; that life, which entering within our life, shall become a living fountain of mercy vitalizing all the stagnant backwaters of our experience. If you will bring your failures to him, you shall have them restored from the dead, and transformed into successes.

*Let us, then pray —*

For deepened spiritual life. For the touch of faith that will enable us to lay hold on eternal life.

O God, Who by Thine Only-begotten Son hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; grant us, we beseech Thee, that

the power of Thy Son's Resurrection, may be the renewing of our spirit, and the resurrection of our souls from the dead; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

. . . . .

"That which was made in him was life, and the life was the light of men." St. John describes our Lord as the Divine and Eternal Logos through whom all things exist, entering the world of humanity in the very act of creation, and by the impartation of himself to man making men the partakers of his own Divine Life. This life in man is converted into light—the inextinguishable light of the Divine Presence—which struggles with the mysterious darkness of evil, but proves itself unconquerable: "The darkness overcame it not." He is the True Light which lighteneth every man who comes into the world. But though the darkness could not conquer, it effected ignorance and procured the rejection of the Light by many who were the Light's own. Then the Logos drew nearer to humanity, veiled himself in the garment of man's flesh, became Incarnate and dwelt among us, and to as many as received him the darkness broke, and they became in a new and higher sense God's sons, and beheld the glory of the Incarnate God and abide in him forever.

The result of the self-impartation of God In-



carnate to men whereby men receive power to become the sons of God, St. John calls *eternal life*. Eternal life, therefore, is not an indefinite extension of the natural life under new conditions—it is not the progress and perfecting of that natural life through conformity to the will of God, as you might cultivate a plant more and more, till its blossoms become larger and fairer—it is rather a new gift to man due to a new action of God, a new self-manifestation of God, so that man can now be called a new Creation—"a new Creation in Christ Jesus." Man is thereby lifted to a new state of being, that state which we call spiritual, not because he is animated by new desires, or has gained a new outlook on life, or become possessed of a new set of principles, but because he has had communicated to him a new energy in that he has been made one with Christ and the life of Christ functions through him. As the mysterious life of the body makes itself known by its manifestation in each member of the body, giving it the power to do its work; so the life of Incarnate God, into whom we are taken and of whom we are made members, manifests itself in each child of his—manifests itself in the acts which we call spiritual and which are the reactions of our spiritual nature to the stimulus of his presence.

This life of the Incarnate which is imparted to

us functions in us even though we are unconscious of its presence and the meaning of the consequent actions. I talk with a boy about his religious life. He tells me that he goes beyond the routine prayers which have been taught him and says prayers "in his own words." He cannot give me any clear notion of the meaning of that, but I know. I know that the indwelling presence of Jesus is awakening in him spiritual desire which expresses itself in the beginning of the life of prayer: he has unconsciously translated the impulse Godward that his soul quest gives him into the terms of his own need. The boy tells me that he would like to make his communion more often. I do not push him to say why—he could most likely not put the "why" into words; but I know why. The Incarnate God he has received in his communions is drawing him into closer intimacy, is making himself felt with a tender attractiveness that is translated in the boy's consciousness as a dim love. He tells me that he has overcome the impulses of the flesh, and I know that the all-pure Jesus is strengthening him against temptation and imparting to him the love of purity.

In later life we find the same phenomena in an increased attraction to the things that are spiritual. Even here it is not necessary that we should have clearness and distinctness in the analysis of our

spiritual state—that we should be over-anxious about the “why”. To attempt to find a clear line of demarcation between our mind and the mind of Christ often leads to perplexity and scrupulousness. It is enough to recognize, in a general way, that we are being led to increased love of spiritual activity, to increased eagerness for service. It is well that we can perceive in ourselves, underlying whatever are our spiritual activities, an increased consciousness of the presence and action of our Lord.

In connection with this it is perhaps well for us to scrutinize our life of prayer. It is in that, I think, that the indwelling Life of our Lord commonly manifests itself. It vivifies our prayers, filling them with a sweetness and joy. Our life of prayer began most likely when we began the practice of meditation. Perhaps it has continued at that stage. That, I fancy, represents the high-water mark in prayer of a good many serious Christian lives. Why is this? We certainly ought to be able to push on beyond meditation. And no doubt many do by changing what is still formally meditation into another state of prayer. Of course the limitations of meditation as a form of prayer are obvious. We need, no doubt, the discipline of it, the training and the application of the mental faculties to a given subject. But in many

cases, at least, it becomes too completely an intellectual exercise and reduces the action of the feelings to a minimum, and, what is more serious, keeps us so busy with our own thoughts that we have no attention for anything else. We are altogether given over to the exercise of memory and intellect and will. The result is that we are not in an altogether receptive attitude of soul. We make so much noise with our own speaking that we are unable to hear God when he tries to speak to us.

I wish to be understood as not in the least degree undervaluing meditation. In its own place it is invaluable as a spiritual help and discipline. The practice of daily meditation extending over years, it may be, has built up many a soul in thorough knowledge and well-grounded experience. What I want to insist on now is that, assuming the value of meditation, it still does not cover the whole field of prayer, nor is it the variety of prayer at which we can afford to stop. The predominance of the intellect in it, which is no doubt good for most of us in a certain phase of spiritual development, is the limitation that needs to be removed if prayer is to mean for us the exercise of all our spiritual powers in close union with our Lord: if it is to mean a state in which our Life is to be admitted to our lives to work his will in them. To put it another way, we need a form of prayer in

which the affections play the dominant role, in which our attitude toward God is that of receptivity.

That alternative form which I am suggesting is what is technically known as *affective prayer*. Many of us, no doubt, have passed into it unconsciously while we thought we were making meditations; for, fortunately, we are taught by the Spirit more than by man, and the Spirit leads us in his own way to the acquisition of his gifts. After all, the *rules* of the spiritual life are nothing more than the schematization of our spiritual experience which comes, not because of the rules, but is born of the action of God on our souls. But the rules are valuable in that they are an attempt to grasp and render intelligible *universal* spiritual experience, that the individual may order his own experience in accord with it. Affective prayer is that form of prayer in which our own activity is reduced to a minimum and the activity of God upon us becomes the essential feature of the prayer-state. It differs not very much from the Practice of the Presence of God, which is one form of it.

It consists of putting one's self in the presence of God and submitting ourselves to him and waiting for his action. As the mind *will* work, whether we want it to or no, we occupy it with some little thought of God, of his goodness or mercy; we



think of some incident in our Lord's life, of his birth or his agony; we fill the mind with some phrase of the Creed or the Lord's prayer. In a way this is simply to recollect the mind, to gather the attention on a single point. Then instead of proceeding to develop this theme intellectually, after the manner of meditation, we dwell upon it emotionally, by way of brief acts of faith, hope and love. The more the intellectual element can be suppressed the better: the more intense the steady vision of God, the embracing of him by a single act of the spirit as the object of our desire, the more helpful the prayer. Our whole attempt is to say and do as little as possible ourselves, just offering ourselves to the action of God. Think of yourself, for instance, as kneeling before the Crucifix or Tabernacle, and making a simple act of faith in our Lord's presence, holding the thought of that presence in your mind as long and as intensely as you can. As the mind tends to waver and stray and other thoughts intrude, prevent them by some half-spoken thought—"I am thine, Lord, receive me." "Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore." "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." There is an infinite range of subjects and affections by which the soul may be thus presented to the action of our Lord. But the essence of the matter is that we are receptive, expectant, wait-



ing; that we are believing and loving rather than seeking to learn.

At first sight this form of prayer seems simpler and easier than meditation; in fact, that is not at all the case. It is much harder to keep the affections tense than the intellect. The persons who at the first attempt find it easier, do so because they have passed into a dreamy state in which *there is no activity*. But effective prayer, while it attempts to keep the soul passive to our Lord's action, is at the same time *running to meet him*, with powers that are thoroughly aroused. To dream is never to pray.

This may seem rather a digression from our subject than an unfolding of it; but I do not think it so, and I have introduced it here because prayer, especially the more advanced forms of prayer, seem to me the most effective instruments that our Lord who is life uses to unite himself to us and transform his Life in us into Light. "In his Life we see light." He becomes thus the inner guidance, the Inner Light of Mystics, the Way as well as the Goal, the sustaining power in the way to God.

In the maturity of the Christian life, when communion with God has come to be, not an unanalyzed phenomenon, but an understood fact, we come to rely on this indwelling presence, on the

Life which is Light, as our sustenance and support in every event of life. The transition from immaturity to maturity is evidenced in two ways. First, in our immaturity we thought of God as "In heaven." Perhaps most Christians so think of him all the time. The notion of God with which Christians have been reproached, as that of "a big man who lives in another street," is near enough to the fact of many a man's thought to have its sting. God is a distant source of power to which we, on occasion, resort. But in maturity God is within us; or, perhaps, we are in God. The sense of distance is abolished. In the second place, whereas we had thought of God as one to whom we might resort on special occasions, we now think of him as one necessarily concerned in every fact of our lives. It is not that experience occasionally requires God, but that he is the constant factor in an ever-changing experience. We depend on his help in a more intimate sense than we depend upon the help of our friends. In our prayers, in our communions, before the Blessed Sacrament, we find him; but we find him, too, in our room, in the street, in the country walk. And we learn to *make use of him* constantly in the latter situations. And it is the use of the Divine Presence in these that I would especially stress. As we walk down the street some morning we

are conscious of the Divine Presence filling it. This crowd of busy men and women going their several ways, intent upon their business or their pleasure, all unthinking as they are, of any Divine Presence at all, are God's children; all have in them some life which is a tiny spark, at least, of that Light which enlighteneth every man. God has come to them, his own, and their lives have been in some sort changed by that coming, whether they have received or rejected. And because he has given all these the power to become the Sons of God, there is a bond of interest between them and us. You share with them a nature which Christ has given his life to redeem. So they become interesting one by one. That group of lads in whom the brute nature speaks so loudly, that flamboyant girl, painted, powdered, dyed, with the lust of the flesh looking out of her bold eyes—they seem as far as possible removed from anything divine; yet they are "his own," though the knowledge of him has not yet penetrated to the dark places where their souls dwell. These are lives for tears. And those men there, whose hard faces, and scraps of their conversation that you catch, tell you that "they mind earthly things"—they are the most hopeless class of society, more hopeless than the hooligan or the harlot, yet you know that the power of the Light is more potent

than the power of the Darkness, and that a man who sat at the seat of custom once left it to follow Christ. But your heart is heavy, and you find it difficult to hope for that dirty tramp to whom you nevertheless give a dime in forgetfulness of the behests of "organized charity," and you look out into the sunlit street hoping to find your vision in the sunlight. There is a woman in a motor with two little dogs on the seat beside her! She might well be the despair of God, if God ever despaired! But he never does. He is Life, Life in all these, Life struggling, striving to express itself in every soul that he has made. Even the woman in the motor with the little dogs that the ragged child on the pavement is staring at, the ragged child herself, all this bewildering crowd—the Life strives in and with them and is eager to find in them the means of its self-expression. Yes, God is in the many colored life of the streets, with its infinitely varied types and its startling contrasts, seeking to "come unto" them, for indeed they are "his own."

He who takes God with him out into the world of his daily life, and applies God, as it were, as the key to all he sees, arrives at great interpretative power. The deep emotions of the soul that are stirred by contact with the world become the medium of revelation. To the deep quiet of the

soul before the beauty of the sunset, its tumultuous beating at the sound of glorious music, its hush before some great tragedy, these give him glimpses of the "ways of God." Spiritual truths that have been taught to us, flash into significance, and start out clear and naked upon the page of life. We find God and the working of God everywhere, not in some intellectual creed of his omnipresence, but in the pages the Book of Life opens and in which we now read with understanding. It is not so much an intellectual process that has been going on in us, the development of our powers of insight and observation, as the surrender of our powers. We have not at last mastered, at the expense of much effort, the mind of Christ, but the mind of Christ has mastered us. And we come back to St. John to interpret to us what has happened. "In him was life and the life was the light of men." As our Lord masters us we see, as it were, with his eyes. The Life that he is, is the Light by which we now see. "In his light we see light."

I can fancy someone saying, "That is all very well and is a very beautiful ideal, but it does not take place, at least with any frequency. I hardly recognize—

Ah, that is another thing—*recognize*. To have a certain process going on, and to recognize, that

is, be able to analyze and give an account of it, are two things. But the process is going on in all Christians whether they note it or not. If you think over what I have been saying you will recognize it in some stage of advancement in yourself. There are in your experience moments when your average way of taking life presents itself as inadequate and unsatisfying. Usually you accept it as inevitable and the necessary; and then the moment comes when you perceive that it is what it is by virtue of your acquiescence. It sometimes happens to enter a room which in the half-light of drawn curtains looks comfortable and rather attractive; and then the windows are cleared, and the keen light of mid-day sweeps in, and we see the room for what it really is—tawdry and pretentious. And sometimes the Life which is Light falls into our lives, letting its revealing rays play upon the tawdry furniture of our soul. It is a cruel light that falls on the pretentious screens of our compromises and shows them for the worthless articles they are; that shows the dust of prejudice which we have tried to think was deep conviction; that shows what we have conceived to be our virtues, to be indifferent copies of the social conventions of the society of which we form a part. In such moments of self-recognition as that we have the chance, at any rate, of getting near the truth



about ourselves, if we can endure to stand in the cruel sunlight and let the truth sink deep. It is the moment when the possibility of a renovation of life suggests itself, a moment of keen striving of our human spirit with the Spirit of Christ. The impulse to take one's self in hand, and clear out all these shams and pretenses and compromises, to put an end once and for all to our excuses for neglect of service, when our alleged inability turns out to be but disguised sloth; to get the alternative, Jehovah or Baal, God or Mammon, Christ or self, explicit, becomes strong. And then the immense work of the change overwhelms us, and we draw back the curtain and reduce the light till the house of our life seems decently habitable. You have watched a horse attempting to free a wagon that has got in the mud and have seen the strain of the muscles in the tough pull that should loose the load; and there was a second when there was a beginning of movement and success was on the point of attainment. But just then the muscles relaxed and it was all to begin again. We see our problems, and we seem on the very point of success, and then the spiritual muscles decline to act and we fall back. No; it is not that we have not our moments of clear seeing; it is not that the Life of God does not shine into the dark corners of our lives, it is not that the

vision fails or the voice is silent; it is that something intervenes and distracts the attention and possesses the affections and divides the will; and we drop the attempt in disheartenment. The *something* that comes between our dawning spiritual vision of our lives, the conviction that our religion requires that they be treated as the expression of a Divine Life which inhabits us, and our energetic actions in response to our vision, is some phase of what we broadly call the world—the complex and sum of all that is opposed to God. The Trouble with the world is that it withdraws attention from the proper concerns of our life and consumes the energy which, if properly directed, would have sufficed for their sanctification. A worldly life is a very horrible thing to contemplate. It is a life that is hid, not with Christ in God, but in material things and interests. We may define a worldly life as one centered about unspiritual interests; or, perhaps better, as a life all of whose interests are treated as unspiritual. A mode of activity to which we conform ourselves; that is, whose unspiritual ideals we adopt, rather than a mode of activity which we transform by imposing our own spiritual activities upon it. We fall into a way of classing life as worldly or unworldly according to its contents, its specific acts; whereas worldliness is not

this or that set of acts but an attitude of mind towards action. It is a mistake to say that the theatre is worldly and a prayer-meeting unworldly. In the individual experience the reverse may quite easily be the case. It is absurd to suppose that riches lead to worldliness, and poverty is always free from it. The moving picture show is probably patronized by as many worldly people as the opera. It matters little what the contents of life are; it is our total attitude toward life that matters. There is a perfectly worldly way of being a Christian, as you may find by attempting to speak of spiritual truth to the first dozen Christian people whom you meet. Life presents itself as raw material which may be moulded to suit any set of ideals that we possess. The insistent question is whether we are letting the ideals of the glaring material civilization in which we to-day live, impress themselves on us, or whether we have the spiritual vitality to maintain the ideals of the City of God in the midst of the city of this world. Are we carrying out of the Church the ideals which are presented to us in every line of the liturgy—the ideals of humility, of sacrifice, of purity, of charity—and expressing them through the acts of our daily life; or are we bringing the ideals of the world into the Church, and remaining even at the foot of the altar, frivolous pleasure

seekers, slaves of our senses, trifling gossip-mongers, and uncharitable judges? A French writer has said, sweepingly, "there are only a few hundred Christians in the world." We may, no doubt, multiply the number somewhat; but it remains that the impression that the average Christian makes on the world is not that of one who has detached himself from the world and whose interests are plainly elsewhere—is not that of one who is the bearer of a divine message and the manifestor of a divine life.

For into whatever circle of life our duties and obligations carry us, it will there become manifest whose we are and whom we serve. There is small need or use for the *hidden* Christian who regards his religion as his own private concern which is no business of his neighbor. "I don't," he says, "wear my religion on my sleeve, or talk about it in offices and at dinner tables." But the Christian religion is not an esoteric religion; and whether a man talks of it or not, it will be audible and visible in the man if he actually exists. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." An invisible religion is a non-existent religion. It might, to be sure, be hid if it were a special set of observances, a ritual gone through at stated intervals, a few select rules of conduct. But it is not that; it is the expression of an indwelling Life. The

vital question is whether the life of the Incarnate is being suppressed or expressed by us. We are the organs of Christ's self-manifestation, the medium through which he makes himself known. What greater absurdity can we be guilty of than that of substituting for the New Testament conception of a Christian as the regenerate child of God, the new Creation, the member of Christ, in whom Christ Jesus is being formed—the moral man whose life is governed by a few select maxims of good conduct? Whatever else may be said of them they live in different worlds.

I suppose none of us finds his own expression of religion other than disappointing. It is disappointing to get up some hours before daylight and climb the rough way that leads to the mountain top to see the sunrise, only to find, when the hour strikes, that it rises behind mists and we do not see it at all. But perhaps if we would be patient the mists will begin to thin and their greyness be shot through with opal lights—rose and pearl and mauve—till they at last melt away and unclothe the valley o'er which the sun now pours a flood of golden light. And surely if we will be patient of the climbing and the waiting the mists will break in our lives and unclothe the vision of God. Only the waiting must be an *active* waiting. There are so many things in us which are obstructive of our Lord's

manifestation, so many things the obstructive powers of which we do not even perceive till we have set ourselves with much earnestness to follow the Way. Those surface things which we thought of as obstacles in the way of our spiritual development, the occupation which absorbs our time, and the associations that we felt we could not break with, are easily dealt with when once we are in earnest. They look formidable to the timid imagination standing at the parting of the ways and wondering whether it has any power to change its habits. But these turn out to be trifling things when once we start. The real difficulties of the way develop as we go on. There is one in particular that I would note. Nietzsche tells of a traveler who had passed his life in observing men and cities, and who was asked if he had noted any one trait which was common to all the peoples whom he had seen. And the traveler replied, "I have noticed everywhere a certain tendency to sloth." That there is in us "a certain tendency to sloth" is the root difficulty we have to deal with. If, after St. Paul's analysis of the case, a man sees the better and follows the worse, I doubt very much whether it is the worse that is more attractive; it is usually just that it is easier. It is the compulsion that we have constantly to put upon ourselves to keep ourselves up to any high standing that renders spirit-



ual activity so difficult ; and in the majority of cases so impossible. And the true significance of spiritual sloth and its immense obstructive power is not unmasked till we take up with some earnestness the practice of the spiritual life. When we try to bring to bear on the common-place contents of our lives the pressure of spiritual motives that shall lift them out of their common-placeness and transform them into acts of service and adoration, then we begin to understand the obstructive power of sloth.

Our power to overcome this tendency to sloth by the steady, unflagging pressure of spiritual motive, will be the evidence of the operation of the Life in our lives. If I understand the matter, it is most often through a certain sense of pressure that the presence of the Life within our lives is discerned. It is as though something within us were struggling for release, seeking to be born. The results that we are getting do not satisfy, and the inertia of habit struggles with the pressure of ideals, till one or the other conquers. It is the struggle of the butterfly within the chrysalis, though in the spiritual experience of men the butterfly often fails to break its way out. The inertia of life is a tremendous thing ; how often do we see it prevail against the dawning aspirations of a soul al-

most converted. The dead soul is an abortive attempt of the divine life to find expression.

Let it, however, find the powers of the spiritual nature energetic and responsive, and that takes place which in the Apostles' phrase is *Christ being formed in us*. We experience his meaning. "That old things are passing away and all things are becoming new." We emerge, like the butterfly, into a new world, passing out from a world of association with "the hidden things of darkness" into the light of the redeemed and sanctified life. You walk through the meadow on a day when thick clouds have hidden the sun, and each item of the landscape is plain to you; you rejoice in the beauty of the little blue grass flower, in the shyness of the violets that hide beneath the leaves, in the grace of the willow that dips its slender fingers in the brook. And then the clouds break and the sun streams over the earth in a sudden explosion of golden light—and it is a new world. Every point of it is filled with light; it glows and burns and sparkles till you wonder why you thought it beautiful before. The coming of the Living Christ into the world of our consciousness is like that; he comes with a burst of splendor and transfigures it. The values of life are enhanced and transformed. You wonder what you found in life that was attractive when it lay in the darkness of his absence.

“And we beheld his glory,” so the Apostle sums his experience, thinking of the days of his intimacy with one who was the Word made flesh. *Glory* seems to him the word that best gathered into one all the manifestations of the life that had tabernacled in humanity, and which the darkness of humanity could not overcome. The mighty works and the signs, the words which were so different from the teaching of the scribes, and were not as man spake, and threw illuminating flashes into the meaning of God and man, the deeds of tenderness and pity—all these mingled in the “glory” that he saw. And this glory is not withdrawn from earth when the Christ himself passes away into invisibility, hidden by “clouds.” It is a glory that he has left with those whom he has redeemed and regenerated, to whom he gave power to become the Sons of God, and whom he made partakers of his own Life. The Ascended Jesus is not hidden, but is visible in the lives of those who are made one in his Life. Through and in them the Light of Jesus becomes visible in all its fascinating beauty and irresistible power. He is seen to-day in his Holy Ones. We who are his children, his redeemed ones, his new creation, are the recipients of his life and the manifestors of his glory. That is our high and splendid vocation to which we respond by the joyous offering of our lives. We are called up into the moun-

tains with him that when we come down our faces may shine with his transfiguring glory, that men seeing us penetrated by the Light which is Life might have no doubt of the present power of the Incarnate, and might glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

## I AM THE LIVING BREAD.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I am the Living Bread.

*Let us picture —*

**A** FIRST Communion; if you will, as it takes place here at St. Mary's, on a Whitsunday morning. It is a gray morning out there in the streets as the boys and girls are coming from their homes, but in here there is light and color. The red of the Altar hangings is repeated in the priest's vestments, the server's cassock, the flowers on the Altar, and is accented against the soft gray of the pillars and walls. Down in the nave are the newly confirmed, some dozens of eager faces, most of them very young. It recalls, does it not, a day in your own experience, when you knelt here or elsewhere, to receive for the first time the

Body and Blood of your Lord. As we look at these young Christians, there is not, perhaps, as much recollection as we could wish; but it is a strange, unusual thing that they are engaged in, so we must allow for tense and excited nerves. But there is eagerness and expectancy, and, in the end, awe. They come to kneel at the rail with a pathetic desire to do what is customary, to remember their instructions; and as the priest comes to them, there are hands stretched out that tremble a little, there are awe-stricken faces, there are eyes in which he catches the flash of tears. These souls that only yesterday experienced the grace of pardon are opened wistfully to our Lord with the expectancy of some mysterious blessing. These are pure abodes where the Lord that was Crucified and is Risen enters in to dwell, if he may, forever. Think of yourself, once more, as you knelt at your first Communion.

*Consider, first —*

That the Holy Communion is the means which our Lord has chosen to perpetuate his vital union with human souls. "He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. 'As the Living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.'" The insistence of the Church upon fre-



quency of Communion is based on this—that through participation in the virtue of this Sacrament “our sinful bodies are made clean by his Body, and our souls washed through his most precious Blood, and we may evermore dwell in him and he in us.” We have some difficulty in appropriating these plain statements as the exact meaning of our Communion. There are moments when we seem to find their truth; and then our sense of their reality tends to diminish as we pass into moods that seem unspiritual. But consider, that it is precisely in such moods that we most need to fix our minds on the nature of the act of Communion. We must beware of letting ourselves down to the level of our inferior moods; or, indeed, of letting ourselves be influenced at all, by moods, in our relation to our Blessed Lord. If our best moments, our moments of keenest perception of our Lord’s presence, are rare, we can at any rate live in the light and inspiration of *those* moments. The memory of them can be brought into the more frequent dull and unspiritual moments as stimulus to our tired faculties, as impulse to the will, as warmth to the emotions, rousing them to go out to meet the coming Guest of the soul with longing. That soul has gained much which has learned to insist that those passing moments that it has come to

recognize as its best, shall tend to become habitual through persistency of spiritual effort.

*Consider, second —*

What it means to the soul to be filled constantly with the Personal Presence of its Savior, to have only to open its doors for him to come in. If we were more confident in our belief in the Real Presence, should we not find a growing response to our Lord's coming? One needs so the active welcoming of him. One feels that it is not the fear of sinning that is going to protect us and make us strong against temptation, but a sense of the loving and friendly presence of our Lord with us. There is a certain intimacy with him that grows out of frequent communion that makes us eager to be like him, which makes us long for the growth in us of his purity and holiness. Our habitual attitude toward our Lord has too much the quality of aloofness and distant admiration. It is just that attitude that his Incarnation was intended to break down, to substitute for it the attitude of intimate association. Our relation to our Lord is even closer than that of his Disciples in that it is an inner relation, a purely spiritual nearness, an intercommunion of spirit with spirit, which could only have place after his Ascension. We need to make our communion more explicitly a personal approach

to one whom we love and go forth to meet. When I come to my communion, I am coming to present myself to my Lord as one whom he has chosen out of all the world to bear his name and to be his friend. If I trusted to myself, I might hesitate to come; but I come trusting in his promises; I come because he bids me come; I come believing that he wants me. Why should I distrust him and draw back from his offered love?

*Let us pray, then—*

For more of confidence in our approach to our Lord; for a securer grasp upon his promises, a more perfect trust in his word: "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

We give Thee thanks, O Lord our God, after having received Thy holy, spotless, immortal, and heavenly Mysteries, which Thou hast given us for the benefit, sanctification, and healing of our souls and bodies. And we pray and beseech Thee, O good Lord, the Lover of men, to grant that the Communion of the holy Body and precious Blood of Thine Only-begotten Son may procure for us faith that needeth not to be ashamed, love without dissimulation, fulness of wisdom, healing of soul and body, repulse of every enemy, fulfilment of Thy commandments, an acceptable defence before the awful judgment-seat of Thy Christ.

One likes to think of the first Eucharist of the Apostles, after the coming of the Holy Spirit had endued them with power from on high and distributed to them the gifts of ministry, which he who had on Ascension Day led his "Troop of Captives" to the court of heaven had received for men. We think of it as being most likely on the morrow of that first day of the Holy Spirit. It would be in that Upper Room where they had eaten their Last Passover, and had shared in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament which was to be the center and object of Christian worship "till he come." During the days lately past they had gathered there in "fear of the Jews." Now they gather in joy and gladness in the strength of the Risen Life and in the power of the Indwelling spirit. St. John, I like to think, would be the celebrant, and they would renew the acts of the Institution, and receive with the elements a renewed sense of the Master's presence. How vivid would be their certainty that he was restored to them, that his words were fulfilled, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you," as the words were pronounced "take, eat, this is my Body; drink ye all of this, this is my Blood." Jesus was in very deed with them, not through the influence of a memory, but in the fact of his Personal Presence. There was no room for any doubt of his continued existence for he was

known to them, and ever would be, in the breaking of the Bread.

When we try to estimate the influences which bore upon the life of the Apostles and moulded their experience and guided their actions in those critical days that immediately followed the Ascension of our Lord, that shaped their thought as to the meaning of his Resurrection and Ascension and his living Presence in heaven, it is hardly possible to over-estimate the influence exercised by the restored Presence of our Lord that was affected as a part of their daily experience by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Under the strain of the constantly recurring criticism of their experience, the effort to see clearly what it indeed meant, the fact that more than any would clear their thought was precisely the daily renewed experience that *Jesus is here* which was the result of their communions. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me," was so true just then. There were so many mysterious words of our Lord that became clear in the light of the Real Presence—all those words about going away that he might come again; those promises of an abiding presence with them till the end of the world. Here, before whatever improvised altar they might set up, all would be plain. This Jesus whom they had seen go in the clouds of heaven, and whom they had expected to

so come as he had gone, was come otherwise; he is with them in the unseen Presence of the sacrament.

And the restored Presence was not an ineffective or silent Presence: it was active and energetic, a Presence that was inspiration. During the years that they had passed with him he had guided them by the spoken word; now he is to guide them by inner inspiration; he will not speak *to* them but *in* them, and they will not be less but more, certain of his Voice. And as human beings will always need objective facts on which to lean, which are to them the pledges, the signs, the means of inner realities, they have been provided in the Holy Eucharist with the pledge, the sign, the means of the Presence which morning by morning, entering into their souls, becomes known to them in the impulse that it imparts to their action, the strength that it gives to their wills, and the illumination that it sheds into their minds. They go forth from their communions ready to meet the opposition of the world, ready to stand before rulers and kings, able to speak with words of wisdom which they know are not of their cunning planning, but are sent as the Spirit gives, ready, when the call comes, to lay down their lives, ready to drink of the cup and be baptised with the baptism, strong in the consciousness which they have of being led by his Presence to the fulfilling of his will.



There is little said about the Holy Eucharist in the New Testament; but what is said is quite sufficient to indicate the place that it held in the new life of the followers of Jesus. At the beginning of the Book of the Acts there are two passages which say all that needs to be said. The first passage is that which gives the notes, so to call them, of the new born Church: "And they continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread and of the prayers." "The breaking of the Bread" is thus one of the salient notes of the community from the outset, and its place is emphasized by this other passage from the Acts: "They continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread at home;" that is, in the Upper Room, no doubt, which formed their first "church." Here, while they still delayed to break entirely with their ancestral religion, and perhaps thought it might not be needful to do so, and therefore continued their attendance on the Temple services, they met for that act of worship which was distinctively Christian. Here the Holy Eucharist was their daily act of worship and the bond of their unity with one another and with their risen Lord.

In a sense, the Eucharistic doctrine of the New Testament was very simple; that is, it is expressed in few words and has not reached the elaboration

of statement which later was compelled by the development of thought. Of course it is impossible to keep any subject that is of vital interest to men in the simplicity of its first statements. It is one of the common phenomena of the history of thought that those who are the most strenuous advocates of freedom of thought are most averse to the complexities of statement which are the necessary outcome of that freedom. We cannot very well go through the world keeping statements without asking the meaning of them, and when we ask their meaning we are on the road to a developed theory. We have left simplicity behind it seems. But what we have really done is to analyze our seemingly simple statements that we may understand them better. In the beginning the Church was content with the unanalyzed statement that Jesus is God; in the event, it took centuries to determine what is implied in those words. In the beginning the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist was received in the same unanalyzed way, and is capable of statement in the words: "Jesus is here." The doctrine which St. Paul "received" is almost as simple: "the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ, the cup which we drink, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ?" It remained for later times to introduce complexity. Complexity belongs to the time of

analysis and controversy, but perhaps for us who believe the brief statement of the Apostle is best.

For what we mean by the Real Presence is that Christ, as he promised, comes—Jesus is here. To apprehend and act on that truth there is small need of speculation; there is need of spiritual apprehension. "I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven," he says. Jesus is here, on the altar, in the tabernacle. He is here utterly,—perfect God and perfect man. What we need is to believe him, to receive him, to worship him. "I am the Living Bread, whoso eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, I will raise him up at the last day." Yes; we believe, we eat, we live, we shall rise.

It is very difficult, people say, to believe that quite literally. Ah! it is just that sense of difficulty which has led to the elaborate analysis which is objected to as being *theology* rather than *religion*. But how should we expect that such a fact would be other than difficult? Any fact of the material world, facts as simple of statement as that water wets, or fire burns run out into insoluble mysteries if you push the analysis far enough; they only seem simple. What we mean by simplicity is not at all that they are simple, but that they are familiar; so familiar that we never think to ask what they mean. How then should not facts which deal, not with chemical processes, the relations of

molecules, of electrons, which get back ultimately to the constitution of matter, where we lose ourselves in a maze of speculation, but with the relations of spirit, with the relations of the soul to its Maker, with the means that the Incarnate adopts to enter into relation with his members, not be mysterious and difficult? They cannot be apprehended by the senses but only by the grasp of faith. "Jesus is here" is a proposition addressed directly to our faith; and is easily appropriated by those who have the gift of faith. It is incapable of any form of statement which shall be without difficulty for the intellect.

It is no doubt true that much of the feeling of difficulty which ordinary folk feel in regard to religious facts or doctrines is, not a difficulty of the intellect at all, but of the imagination. It is due primarily to unfamiliarity with the facts. Most of the strange facts of life we have become so familiar with that they never strike us as strange, they never set the imagination to work on them. They are facts that we assume that we understand because they never create any surprise. I have sometimes thought that the difficulty that many feel in regard to the Real Presence is in some measure due to their *isolation* of the fact—their assumption that it is the only fact of the same order that is presented to them. If they could see it related to other

like facts much of the feeling of difficulty would pass. Let us see if we can so relate it.

I take it that no one who is likely to read these pages will have experienced anything of the *feeling of difficulty* of the kind of which we have been speaking when they think of the Presence of God. God is one and omnipresent, we are told; and that statement is capable of being expressed in this form: *God is here*. By which, of course, we mean, not that God exerts power here, but that God is here, is personally present in this room in which I am writing or in that room in which you are reading. That is a very wonderful, a very mysterious fact; but it does not create in you the reaction, "I do not see how that can be, I find it hard to believe that." To be sure, you do not see how it can be; but you long ago appropriated it by faith and hold it without any emotional revolt. You believe simply, God is here. So it is likewise a part of your faith that the God who is one and omnipresent, "Came down from heaven," and "was incarnate" in Christ Jesus. You read his human life in the Gospels, you follow the story of his ministry, his death, his Resurrection and Ascension. When you sum up your belief about this wondrous life you find that the simplest form in which you can express your belief is this—*Jesus is God*. That again is a fact that you have appropriated by faith and it has

become part and parcel of your Christian profession. You do not see how it can be, but the statement produces in you no feeling of difficulty. Once again: you are accustomed to receive the sacraments and you experience that there is a reaction of them upon your spiritual nature; that through them you are brought into a special relation to God, and that God acts through them upon your soul. You call this action *grace*: and when you try to state the doctrine of grace in its simplest terms you say, *Grace is God*. Grace is not a force acting on you from without, from a distance; but is the presence of God in your soul. Once more, you do not see how that can be; but you know that it is because you have experienced it. The statement that it is true produces no feeling of an insuperable difficulty to accepting it.

Now all those facts, God is here, Jesus is God, Grace is God, are facts of the same order, what we are wont to call supernatural facts, or, as we might call them, facts of the spiritual order. What I want you to see is that the Presence of the Incarnate God in the Sacrament of the Altar, what we call the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, is also a fact of the same order. It is no more wonderful or difficult than those other facts and ought not to produce any other sort of reaction when we think of it.



But perhaps there is another element that enters into our sense of the difficulty of the Real Presence. One sometimes finds in talking with people in regard to the Blessed Sacrament that they have confused the symbolic acts which are performed at the celebration of the Eucharist with the mode of the Real Presence itself. The celebration of the Eucharist is not only the administration of a sacrament, it is the offering of a sacrifice. The Lord's death is shown, the one sacrifice forever is presented before the Father. In the process of offering the sacrifice the death of our Lord is symbolically set forth, and the Body broken and the Blood shed are represented by the bread and wine. But when we connect that sacrifice and the sacrament of the Holy Communion and speak of the presence of our Lord's humanity, it is not at all meant that our Lord's Body is *by itself* present under the form of bread, or that his *Blood by itself* present under the form of wine. A misunderstanding that this *is* what is intended, and that we are expected to think of our Lord's Body and Blood as *separated* in the sacrament is a frequent source of difficulty and confusion. But the sacramental symbolism does not imply any real division in our Lord—that is impossible. Our Lord is present in the sacrament as Incarnate God—God and man, one Christ. And what we receive in the sacrament is not his Body,

in separation, under the element of bread, and his Blood, in separation, under the element of wine, but we receive *him*, God and man, wonderfully condescending to unite himself with our spiritual nature that "we may dwell in him and he in us." The account of the sacrament may be simplified to this: *Jesus is here*, and is come to dwell in our souls, mysteriously entering into union with them. When we thus think of the Eucharist, as the Catholic Church has always thought of it, all alleged *materialism* of the Real Presence is seen to be swept away.

This presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist is rightly spoken of as a *spiritual presence*; that is, a presence which is after the laws of that spiritual mode of existence which our Lord entered upon at the Resurrection and Ascension and not after the laws of the material world. He is present in a divine and heavenly manner, and not in a manner that can be cognized by the senses. The senses touch matter not spirit. It is the presence of the Risen and Ascended Jesus. What we need to apprehend that presence is not profound learning, but intense faith. No learning, no attempts to analyze or define the mode of the presence, are likely to help us much: they are much more likely to confuse us by importing into a purely spiritual transaction terms which belong to

science and philosophy. What we need is not the learning of the theologian or philosopher, but the simplicity of the child. The child does not impose the categories of matter and time and place upon a spiritual act, and our difficulties arise from the fact that we will not refrain from so doing. The child is able to accept the truth "Jesus is here" without raising the question of the relation of his presence to the earthly elements that symbolize and convey it. A father and mother took their little boy on a Sunday morning to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It was the child's first experience of Catholic worship, and the parents had done what they could to prepare him by telling him the meaning of what he would see. He had the child's eager interest in the new sights and sounds and actions; but when the sermon came he fell asleep and was permitted to sleep on as the service proceeded. It was well on toward the end when he awoke, and, after a moment of recollection, he leaned to his mother and whispered, "*Has he come?*" If we could but attain that simplicity! There is all the eucharistic doctrine that we want. We go to our communions with the conviction that he who is the Living Bread, the Food of our Souls, is coming; and after devout participation in the mysteries we go away with the certainty that he has come—go away knowing that he is the guest

of our souls, the spiritual meat and drink that nourishes them unto Eternal Life.

Let us see to it, then, that when we dwell on the thought of our Lord's presence, we are seeking as aids to our apprehension of it, not the skill and training of the critic, but the insight of the mystic. We may say that the mystic is one who trusts his spiritual faculties to interpret to him the truths of the Spirit. He is one who has direct apprehension of the spiritual world. And this direct apprehension is not, or ought not to be, the possession of rare souls. The Christian religion is a mystic religion and it is possible for all Christians to approach its truths by the way of mystic apprehension. To do so, no doubt, requires a certain orientation on the part of the believer. He must have divorced himself from the materialism and intellectualism which is characteristic of much approach to religious truths and practice, and have accustomed himself to test the acts in which his faith expresses itself by the results that he spiritually discerns. Does he find as the result of them that he is conscious of the presence of God? Does he know that the God he is appealing to in his intercessions, to whom he is offering himself in his acts of self-oblation, to whom he is uniting himself in his acts of love, is actively participant to all these actions? I do not mean, does he have visions or fall into ecstasy, but

simply, is he conscious, does he know, that God is here and acting? The consciousness may not be vivid—if it is only a vague consciousness one can still be certain of it. I fancy that many of us do not have this consciousness because we are not expecting it, make no room for it, are so concerned with our own action that we are inattentive to the action of God. But the things of the Spirit are, and are only, spiritually discerned. The attentive spirit discerns many things which are missed by the unexpectant spirit. It is with expectant spirits that we must approach our Lord in the Eucharist, discerning the Lord's body, not only distinguishing between it and common things, but discerning its reality in the sense of communion with him which our participation brings.

The exclusive reliance upon the intellect as the sole interpretative factor of our nature is disastrous in the matter of religion. We arrive at the certainty of faith far sooner when we trust ourselves to the light and leading of our spiritual powers which have been disciplined and strengthened by constant use. We do not feel that St. John or St. Paul arrived at their knowledge of God by scientific or philosophical methods. They have seen. What they have to tell us of the meaning of our Lord and of his work for us is the outcome of their personal experience of him. As I have pointed out,

they know him, not as one knows an historical character whose life they have studied, or whom they have, perhaps personally known; but they have an immediate knowledge of him which is the result, not altogether of vision, but of the silent intercourse of many years of prayer and meditation and communion. They know him because they are one with him with a unity which involves his constant action as well as theirs.

Our spiritual experience is much less than theirs no doubt, but it is of the same order—we see and know. With us, at any rate, it is a fluctuating experience, it is to us like the rise and fall of tides. There are moments of intense apprehension when the tides of spiritual certainty sweep up the shore and flood all our life. We experience then the exhilaration of immediate knowledge: all doubt is washed away. At such moments we feel that we can meet all that life brings us in a glad spirit because we are so certain of God. Such moments tend to connect themselves, do they not, with our communions? We remember mornings when it was indeed the Bread of Life that we received—received with souls that were responsive to the Divine Presence, and overflowed with the joy of possession. We remember whole days wherein our Lord abode in us and we were comforted and consoled by his presence, strengthened for the work



of the day, or just filled with the glad sense of his nearness. But it is true also that there are moments of ebb, when the tides of spiritual vitality recede and leave the rocks bare and the shores strewn with impotent desires and ineffective aspirations. There are dreary and colorless moments when we come away from our communions with no sense of quickened spirituality or stimulated powers. There are long days in which the word of our Lord is rare: there is no open vision. These are days of discipline and waiting and of the hidden action of God. "There is a hiding of his power." But only a hiding, not a failure of it. Perhaps our spiritual apprehension has run low through our absorption "in the other things," which distract the life from God. Perhaps there has been real failure of faith in us. Perhaps it is one of the tests of his love. In any case we must not doubt but hold the faster to him. He is still with us.

"When He appoints to meet thee, go thou forth—

It matters not

If South or North,

Bleak waste or sunny plot.

Nor think, if haply He thou seek'st be late,

He does thee wrong.

To stile or gate

Lean thou thy head, and long!

It may be that to spy thee He is mounting

Upon a tower,

Or in thy counting

Thou hast mistaken the hour.

But, if He come not, neither do thou go

Till Vesper chime,

Belike thou then shalt know

He has been with thee all the time."

This expression of the divine presence, this direct apprehension by faith of spiritual reality, comes almost naturally to some souls. They have never been disturbed by doubt or sin, and have lived from childhood in communion with their Saviour. But in most of us—we purchase this liberty at a great price: the price of penitential tears and times of indifference and neglect redeemed by hard work. Our spiritual certainty comes to us after many hours of submissive prayer have cleared the spiritual vision, after much meditation has cleansed our inner faculties and devout communions have strengthened them—long hours in which we have patiently waited for the Divine Advent. One of our constant dangers is that we lose our effort through its vagueness. How much of what we think to be spiritual effort, is only vague aspiration, a drifting on the tides of the imagination rather than a resolute pulling against the stream of inflowing discursive thought. It is easy to let one's-self wander through the meadows of the Gospel, admiring the flowers, but without plucking any bloom or

fruit for our own immediate need. And this seems to be a special cause of failure in many communions. We so often come to our Lord with inchoate aspirations rather than as resolute knockers at the gate, who know quite well why they want to enter. "Seek and ye shall find"; but only those find who are quite clear as to what they are seeking. So many communions are fruitless because we did not come looking for any fruit. So many knock timidly at the door who could not tell what they want if it should, perchance, be opened. We must come with whatever lame and halt we have with an express request that they may be healed. Our Lord's bounty no doubt, outruns our desires; but the Pearl Merchant was at least *seeking* goodly pearls when he found that whose surpassing beauty caused him to sell all that he had to acquire it.

The Holy Eucharist is the means of our Lord's self-revelation. Through it he makes himself known to us. It is not easy for him to make himself known; it is sometimes impossible. He found in the days of his flesh that there were places where it was hopeless for him to attempt to speak of the truths he had brought to men, where no mighty works were possible. There are souls now in which he cannot work. He works best in an atmosphere of love. The Saints have such perfect vision of our Lord because their love is so perfect,

without any withholding. Love is the great revealer. We feel that those marvelous pages of St. John are the fruitage of his great love. He, more than anyone else, can tell us of the inner life of his Master because his love saw deeper into that life. While the other evangelists tell us events, the external history of Jesus of Nazareth, Saint John tells us the spiritual meaning of the events. He lingers little over the outward happenings; he is eager to take us with him into the sanctuary of our Lord's thought. You say, "more was revealed to him." I say, "more could be revealed to him." Not only is much given by love, but much is given to it.

Therefore St. John's treatment of the Eucharist is vastly different from that of the other evangelists. They were content to record the act of the Institution. St. John sees in it a mode of our Lord's self-revelation. Hence that marvelous sixth chapter of his Gospel. He dwells lovingly there on the relations of the sacramental Christ to our whole nature—on the permanent union wrought by his reception, on the far-reaching effects of our "eating" of Christ. We are, as it were, transfused with his life. The Holy Communion is that fountain of living water springing up unto eternal life, which he speaks of elsewhere. The eternal, the resurrection, life is directly connected with it.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Our Lord imparted to us, is the principle of eternal life. It is no transient union that is wrought by our sacramental incorporation in him. Because he lives in us, and as long as he lives in us, we live also. The eternal years are as nothing to us; we have passed into the stability of God.

"Not any power the universe can know,  
Can touch the spirit hid with Christ in God.  
For naught that he has made, above, below,  
Can part us from his love."

The certainty of this stability of life "in him," of life that transcends mortality and takes hold upon eternity, which is the characteristic feature of St. John's interpretation of the Eucharist, I venture to think becomes the personal possession of the Christian in proportion to the passion of his love. Love, too, is a medium of revelation. It has its own methods, its ways to knowledge, its own certainties. And what school of love is there that is comparable to the school of the Eucharist? Here is the love that shrinks not from the humility of a hidden life, the love that makes

itself obedient to us, coming to us when we call, putting itself at the disposal of our desire. Our Lord, in the loving offer of himself, has again, as in his life on earth, subjected himself to derision, to scorn, to insult, to denial and rejection. He has put himself in the power of men, made it possible for them "to crucify the Son of God afresh." There is no sadder chapter in the history of Christianity than that which tells the story of the treatment of our Lord in the sacrament of his love.

It lays an obligation on our love, does it not? the obligation not only of vision that we may find him there for ourselves, and by our personal devotion offer ourselves to him; but the obligation of reparation, that we at his sacrament may pray for the forgiveness of those who treat him lightly, and, in their ignorance, despise him. In the joy of our possession let us not forget them.

For our joy in the presence of our Lord is the supreme joy of the Christian experience. Through the sacrament of the altar we know our Lord's presence in the soul, embraced and embracing. We know our possession in him of that Eternal Life from which no earthly power can separate us. We know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge and are filled with all fullness of God.




## I AM THE DOOR.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I Am the Door.

*Let us try to picture to ourselves —*

 OUR Lord inviting men to come to him and find rest. How often the word "Come" is on his lips. It is the call to discipleship: "Come, take up the Cross, and follow me." It is the call to the weary: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you." It is the call to intimate experience of him: "Come and see." We seem to see him reading the character of those whose lives he touches, seeking in their experience some point of contact through which he may offer himself with the best hope of being accepted. We watch him talking with the Woman of Samaria, leading her to see the meaning of her own life and to desire something better, if,

perchance, that will bring her to repentance. We watch his wonderful dealing with the Syro-Phœnician woman, by his seeming repulse of her bringing her faith into activity. He seems to go deep into the inner life of the paralytic who lies on his bed helpless before him, when he says, first of all, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He leads Philip on to more perfect knowledge when he says, "Have I been so long time with thee, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." His teaching opens to men the treasures of spiritual knowledge so that after they have talked with him, it is as though a great light had shined into their lives and lit up the dark places there; as though some door that had hitherto been closed to them were thrown open and they saw hid treasures. What has happened is that he has made them see their lives as they really are, stripped of the coverings in which they customarily swathe them. His words take men into their own souls, and they see themselves with his eyes.

*Consider, first —*

That it is in him that there comes to us Salvation; and that being saved, we go out in his strength to meet the experience that is life. We come to God in him, and then, abiding in him, we go back to life. This is at once our safety and our

strength, that we are in him. This is our confidence, that we have access to the Father through him. Our life depends upon him all the time, and that is its freedom. We do not lose, we acquire, freedom of thought and action in him, because in him we are freed from the ignorance and sin which are the ground of slavery. As I go in and out through him, nothing can harm my life, I am safe. All troubles and perplexities are external. They may hurt very much, but they cannot harm. Do we quite appreciate what a wonderful thing this security of the Christian is? That we are safe from any ultimate harm? The gray rocks rise out of the sea, and on the day of storm the sea beats itself to foam about them, and on the day of calm the sun blisters them, but they stand unchanged for centuries. Our inner lives are shaken by no storms if they are lived under the shadow of his wings, abiding in him we are undisturbed, and our souls go in and out through him and find pasture. When the wolf cometh, there is always a refuge through the Open Door.

*Consider, second —*

That our safety hangs on our readiness to accept sanctuary in him. If we choose to meet the pains of life in our strength; if we choose to fight the world with its own weapons; then the

conditions of our warfare have become carnal. And is it not true that we often let ourselves be lured from the security of the hills to fight in the plains upon equal terms with a stronger adversary? If we accept the world's view of life and adopt its standards, and govern ourselves by its morality, we have abandoned the security that was ours because of our abiding in Christ. Acceptance of our Lord's invitation to come unto him involves coming away from all else. It means the frank adoption of the manner of living which is commended in the Sermon on the Mount. Coming to Christ is a permanent elevation of the life, and a permanent abandonment of the principles of non-Christian living. Consider whether you have really accepted our Lord's invitation to come. What evidence do you find of acceptance? What crucifixion of self, what abandonment of houses and lands, of father and mother, what resolute putting of the hand to the plow with no backward look? Or with the semblance of acceptance, is the world still in your heart? Do you find it possible to go in and out only through him, the One Door? To see the world and eternity alike through the medium of his teaching? No doubt, the pastures of the world are fat and succulent; but before we are filled, the Wolf cometh, and the Hireling fleeth, and we are at the mercy of the cruel teeth. The fall of a life

built on the sands of this world is fatal and final. The Door of the Sheepfold is always open. Have you gone in?

*Let us, then, pray —*

That we may abide in him and there find safety. Let us pray that we may so be in him that all our thoughts and desires may be approved by him, and that he may be ever our inspiration.

O God, Who art the unsearchable abyss of peace, the ineffable sea of love, the fountain of blessings, and the bestower of affection, Who sendest peace to those who receive it; open to us this day the sea of Thy love, and water us with plentiful streams from the riches of Thy grace, and from the most sweet springs of Thy benignity. Make us children of quietness and heirs of peace. Enkindle in us the fire of Thy love; sow in us Thy fear; strengthen our weakness by Thy power; bind us closely to Thee and to each other in one firm and indissoluble bond of unity; through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

. . . . .

"I am the door," our Lord said, "by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." Enter in, that is, to the sheep-fold, which is the place of Christ's rule, the place where are gathered all those who are in him.

It is that state of salvation that we enter when we "put on" Christ. It is the same truth that we have heard our Lord elsewhere teaching, that in Him is the approach to the Father. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Is it true that we are inclined to stop our thought at the point where it touches our union with our Lord and his mystical Body? I sometimes feel that that is a danger. It is so hard to take in all aspects of the truth that we let ourselves rest in a partial statement of it which therefore has the affect of an untruth. Our emphasis falls upon the fact that we are in Christ—"in Christ," thus in some degree obscuring the fact that Christ is the Door opening to, the Way leading to the Father. Our fellowship is with the Father through the Incarnate Son who is the one mediator between God and man. What I am trying to suggest is this whether our personal religion is not sometimes defective through a lack of explicit realization of our relation to the Father; whether we are not, all unconsciously, no doubt, resting in the Mediator, rather than being brought by the action of the Mediator to an apprehension of our union with the Father. Our life of union is a life "in Christ," that is, we are united to his humanity; but to the end that through his humanity which is personally



united to his divinity we in turn should attain union with the divine nature and find our ultimate rest in God. Indeed, we do not reach a final statement of our fellowship, until it is stated as fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God. Union is only completely realized as union with the Blessed Trinity in the splendor of the Beatific Vision.

This promised, we may go back to our Lord's self-presentation as the Door. It is through him that we have access to the Father. And as his life work issues in, and is consummated, by his death, it is upon that Atoning death that we center our attention. "When thou didst overcome the sharpness of death," we say, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

The meaning of the Atonement is best understood by means of the symbol that our Lord used in this connection, that of the Good Shepherd. Ordinarily we do not find statements of the doctrine of the Atonement very comprehensible. We lose ourselves in speculation as to how one can suffer for another, or how God can accept the sufferings of one who has not sinned as a substitute for any atoning action by those who are guilty. Such speculation seems to carry us far away from the Gospel presentation of the relation of our Lord's activity to us. In our Lord's own symbol of his relation

to us, and action for us, we get the needed note—the note that we will do well to hold to, the note of self-identification with man. The Good Shepherd does not stand apart from the flock in solitary suffering; he suffers through and because of his self-identification with them. His sufferings are not something which have “merit,” and are applied to men externally, in a mechanical manner; but something that men are assumed to enter and have applied to them.

Men go into God through him, the Door. They become one with him and, so sharing his life, his experience, it results that his sufferings become theirs. We must beware in religion of all external machinery, of all action of God conceived as outward and compulsory. The action of our Lord in the Incarnation and Atonement is only comprehensible, as saving action for the individual, as the individual comes to participate in it. The Incarnation must be imparted to us by our being assumed into the Incarnate Body, and then because of that assumption we partake of the sufferings and share in the Atonement. The sufferings of Christ are extended to us by virtue of our incorporation in him. The sufferings of the Christian are not meaningless things, but are the extension to him of the experience of his Master. For the sheep go in through him; their entrance to God is through

participation in the Christ-experience. They must recapitulate that: in them the Christ-experience repeats itself. That is really what is meant by following the example of Christ. The theory that has been so popular of late years, and of which, perhaps, Tolstoy is the best exponent, that the imitation of Christ means the imitation of his social conduct, with some attempt at detailed copying of his poverty and self-denial, hardly touches the fringe of the imitation of Jesus. To be poor because Jesus was poor; to be kind because Jesus was kind; seems to me a wholly misdirected way of going about a true imitation, because it is so completely external. The true imitation starts with the fact of our union with our Lord, in the sense that I have been describing, in order that being in him and he in us, his life may be reflected in us: that is, our sufferings may be his sufferings, our joys his joys, our works his works. As his experience was so all-embracingly human it may be repeated under the external setting of any human life. It is not true that in order to be a Christian, to live the Christ-life, one has to repeat the external setting of our Lord's human life, to reproduce the incidents of Nazareth and Galilee. One is by no necessity nearer our Lord on a shoe-makers bench than on a throne. One may abandon wealth to serve God, but one may also use wealth in the service of God.

The annals of sanctity protest against the literalism of the Tolstoyan theory. St. Francis is no more a saint than St. Louis; and neither the poverty of the one, nor the kingdom of the other, created his sanctity; but the life of the Saviour which was in both alike. It is a wretched assumption that you can attain to conformity to Christ by some outer change in the manner of your life. If John Fox was a great Christian it was not by virtue of any eccentricity of dress or manner; if Tolstoy had peace with God it was not because he dressed and lived like a peasant; nor is the Christian character of an Andrewes or a Laud doubtful because they lived in the usual state of bishops of their times. The life of union is possible anywhere and shows itself in the abandonment of self, utter and unstinted, to the will of God, in the will to make all the facts of one's life the matter of sacrifice, the expression of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in us.

This self-surrender to the will of Christ that one's life may express that will results in the Christian life as a life visibly dominated by the mind of Christ. They who have entered by the Door become filled with the Spirit and God-possessed. They also go out; that is, they henceforth live their lives in the world, in whatever station God may call them to, in the light and leading of the Spirit of Christ whom they serve and whose they

are. They *manifest* what they have become. They bear fruit abundantly—those Fruits of the Spirit which are the evidences of the Spirit's energetic presence. They "find pasture" in whatsoever place it is the will of God that they should be. There he provides for them, provides the food that shall sustain their life in him, provides the activity which abundantly occupies the energies of their lives. They do not conquer the world for Christ by despising it, but by finding in it the opportunity of service. It is God's world, and therefore their world. With matchless sweep of vision the Apostle says: "all things are yours; whether Paul of Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

The inner action of Christ must precede the outer action. "They go in and out." And the focus, so to say, of this inner action of Christ's Spirit is the *conscience*. I am afraid that there are many who think trivially of their conscience. It is not to them the voice of the indwelling Spirit, a source of continual guidance in which they can perceive the communication of the mind of Christ to them; but a source of dissatisfaction and unrest. This appears in man's attempt, ever renewed, to substitute something external for the voice of the Spirit. No doubt it is true that our consciences need edu-

cation and training; but it is neither education nor training to take the easy path of substituting some other voice for that which is the organ of God's speech to us. We need all the helps that we can get, but we need to use them as helps, not as final authorities. Any book is dangerous, if it lead us to confide in maxims rather than the light of the Spirit. Any confessor is dangerous, if we come to depend on him rather than on the voice of God speaking in our souls. What we want on our journey through life is a chart to sail by, not a tug-boat to drag us. Our constant tendency is to lean on something other than God. To excuse ourselves in the taking of the easy way we exaggerate our ignorance and incapacity, we look on ourselves as spiritual babes, incapable of walking on our own feet, and feeding ourselves with our own hands. Because we find sympathy and advice pleasant we are always seeking it, disregarding the debilitating effect it may have upon our souls. So we accustom ourselves to run to others rather than to God, and do not learn to listen to the voice of the Divine Teacher. Yet he says, "Ye shall all be taught of God."

I would like to point out that the Sacrament of Penance was instituted for the remission of sins and the imparting of sacramental grace. It was not appointed as a means of getting rid of the



moral responsibility of guiding our lives by the inner voice of God. It was not appointed to enable us to escape the spiritual trouble of making up our own minds. It was not appointed to relieve us of responsibility for the results of our own action. The ends of the Sacrament of Penance have no necessary connection with the direction of the souls. Going to confession is not going to talk to a priest, it is going to talk to God, and there, for most part, it ought to stay. All priests are able to administer the Sacrament of Penance; few are fitted to become directors of souls.

That is not a matter for regret, for few souls need any other direction than that which God gives them through the conscience. Their very ordinary problems of Christian living would present no difficulties to them if they would listen attentively to the inner voice. If we realize that grace is the presence of our Lord in our souls, and that we have access to the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ, we shall feel that we have a guide that is sufficient in the emergencies of life. There is no doubt of that inner voice, if we will but listen. It is the special promise of the Christian covenant that God himself shall be our guide and friend.

In saying this I am not for a moment forgetting that there is such a thing as direction of souls, and

that such direction is a most valuable part of Christian practice. But what is direction? It is the bringing to bear the knowledge, the insight, the experience, of the expert, upon the complex problems of spiritual living, for the purpose of aiding those who are as yet unskilled in the life of sanctity. Direction is direction in the spiritual life. A director is not, nor ought any priest to be regarded as, an expert answerer of conundrums, or a bureau of information, still less as an exterior conscience. Direction is a very serious matter, and should not be resorted to except in serious affairs. Direction is not a synonym for good advice. We need to rise to the spiritual plane where we go in and out through Christ, and find that enough.

But this is a day of second-hand knowledge of all sorts. We are content to *hear about* things rather than *know about* them. The mind seems to be regarded as an indefinitely expansive reservoir into which we can pour floods of unassorted facts to its infinite betterment. Education tends to be reduced to a continuous moving picture show, the spectator of which is supposed to be benefited by the sight of anything, no matter how utterly unrelated to his own life and previous training. "Knowledge made easy" is the motto of the time. But real knowledge cannot be made easy, for it implies mental discipline of a high order. Least of all

can religious knowledge be made easy. Non-supernatural, non-mystical religion can, no doubt be made easy; it is taught at the "movies" of many places of popular preaching. And even when the ideal is purer, there are found many who decline intellectual and spiritual effort, and are content with hearing about religion. So religion, to give it still that name, tends to become second-hand; the imitation of some-one else's religion; not the religion of personal experience, not the forming of Christ in us. But the only religion that has any vitality is the religion of personal experience. The attainment of that is a high and difficult task, the outcome of serious work with ourselves. And therein lies the explanation of so much that seems to be religion, and also of a good deal of revolt from religion. The religion of Christ is proposed to one, and what he perceives in it is a difficult discipline, checking and interfering with his passions and appetites, humbling his pride, and obstructing what he considers to be his liberty; and he will have none of it; but in the name of free thought and human rights tramples it under his feet. Back of how much unbelief, if we could only get at the facts, should we find the revolt of self-will against the restraints of religion, against the pleading of conscience for self-control? I read the other day of a man who thus revolted from re-

ligion and put himself deliberately under the instruction of an atheist that he might once for all get rid of the discomfort of sin. Fortunately, it was a vain attempt; and the Spirit presently conquered him. But without going as far as that, how many cases there are where the quest of religious experience is declined because of the initial demands that a quest promising any success makes upon the activities of man.

There is a quite different case in which the spiritual experience is avoided, but for much the same reason—the hard demands it makes. It is the case of a person who entirely accepts the religion he is taught, and acquiesces in its truth. He does the things that whatever authority he is under proposes to him. He passes for a very good sort of Christian, a most respectable member of the church. But his acquiescence in religious teaching is very far from being the same thing as the assimilation of truth; the truth he accepts is not digested and made into the bone and tissue of a spiritual life. They are low forms of life, the Lichens and Algae, of the kingdom of heaven. They are very difficult to deal with just because of their passive acceptance of all teaching. They are such perfect transmitters that the spiritual currents generate no heat in them. They are careful of forms, and curious about ritual, and (it is about the only way in which they show

vitality) intolerant of changes in religious practice. They will attend divine worship and receive the sacraments with some regularity. But there are in them no smoldering fires of zeal, no inner heat, which will some day break forth in the flames of love. Perhaps what they lack is the imagination which reveals the possibilities of faith. They cannot be made to conceive the Christian faith as dynamic, having transforming power—as an organ of vision revealing to its possessor the secrets of the spiritual world.

The only adequate religion there is, is the religion of experience; and the more complete the religion, the deeper the experience it can reveal to us. But the acquisition of experience means the application of religion in its fullness to the facts of life. It is here clearly a case of the kingdom of heaven suffering violence and the violent taking it by force. We cannot dream our way to experience, we have to force it, each one for himself. Others can help us up to a certain point; they can tell us where and how to work; but no one can do the work for us. A first-hand knowledge and experience is essential.

We get some light on this matter by noting the way in which our Lord taught. "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them." The

function of the parable is to call out effort, to stimulate the intellectual and spiritual powers to activity. It excites, in the first place, curiosity; and with ineffective dreamers and indifferent listeners it never gets beyond that—they simply wonder what it means and never find out. But in those who are capable of spiritual response there is called into action the energy that seeks to know. They come to our Lord with their question: "What might this parable be?" And to them the answer is: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." Those mysteries our Lord unfolds to all earnest seekers—to them he says: "Now the parable is this." The mysteries of the kingdom remain mysteries to those who are content to have them so. The difficulties of faith will remain ever such to those whose eyes have not been opened nor ears unclosed by spiritual discipline. But to those who would know the mysteries of the kingdom, there is "A door opened in heaven," and that door is the living Jesus thro' whom we may "go in and out and find pasture." Jesus is the Door to all mysteries whether of faith or life. The secret is to know him with a living apprehension, to know him and be known of him. "And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments." So our Lord himself says: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,



whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

The way is very plain: the putting ourselves to school to the will of God as manifested in Christ. There is no other way to knowledge than the way of humble obedience. This is the true simplicity of the gospel, that the truth is revealed to those who follow in the way in single-hearted obedience. This is a way that the "Wayfaring man" need not "err in"; for it is not a way of science or philosophy, but a way of desire, a way motivated by love. If we seek first, in our quest of spiritual experience, to find Jesus, and be not turned aside after any other: if when we are told, "behold he is in the desert" of "a reduced Christianity" we "go not forth:" or "behold, he is in the sleeping chambers" of humanitarianism, we "believe it not;" but abide "in the way going up to Jerusalem" there to share in the experiences of his suffering life, surely he will reveal himself to us. Through this life that is carefully shaped according to his revealed will, light will break; into the midst of the daily duties devoutly performed, he will come. Into the inner chamber of prayer where we have locked ourselves "for fear of the Jews" of earthly desires and distractions, he will come and stand and show us his wounds and make us sure of his Resurrection and abiding Presence and give us his gift of peace.

Those who have passed in by the Door, and have known Jesus, are ever ready to go out in his name to testify of him to the world. Those who have known our Lord burn with the message which they feel that they must deliver. It is a message about Jesus—that *Jesus is here*. All the world's night before his Advent was filled with human cries to God: cries of men prostrate before the sacrifices they had invented, praying that they might be delivered from their sense of defilement, and yet clearly conscious that it was "not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"; men crying out of sorrow, out of suffering, out of disaster, and hearing "no voice nor any that answered": men struggling with the environing mystery of life and finding it impenetrable, finding the heavens over their head brass and the earth under their feet iron, echoing to them the sound of their own voices. What was there to sustain human hope? Only that once and again the silence of the night was broken by the voice of some Watchman crying from his tower: only that at intervals the darkness was shattered by voices crying, "I have found, I have heard, I have seen." There was a voice out of the heart of the whirlwind, there a whisper to a man crouched at the mouth of a cave, there was a crying as of a God with a broken heart, "Oh that my people would hearken unto me,"—but

the silences were long. What the voices told men was "God is coming." And then there was another sound, a sound of singing in the midnight, and dawn broke with a *shout* upon the mountain. It was the hour of fulfilled hope, of rewarded expectancy, of crowned success: for the message was Immanuel, God with us. *Jesus is come.*

I sometimes wonder whether anyone can appreciate the salvation which is in Jesus except that it comes to him as deliverance. No doubt, each experience has its own wonder and its own sweetness. No doubt there is a joy which has its own peculiar light of gladness for those who have kept the "dew of the morning" which came to them in their baptism, who have never known what it is to be without God in the world. But is there not a deeper gladness in the hearts of the Twice-born?" In the experience of those who have felt what *rescue* means? Surely there is in our Lord's ministering a note of very special tenderness for such. The lost sheep gets carried in his bosom; the lost coin is found, with the calling of neighbors together to great rejoicing; the lost son is recovered with feasting; and the sound of this gladness is echoed in the very heavens where the angels rejoice in the presence of God. The saints touch this when they say: "Oh Felix Culpa"—Oh happy fault, that revealed the hidden depths of the loving kindness of

our God. Those who know the greatness of their escape, whose sense of redemption has in it the mingled awe and wonder of the great deliverance which has snatched them from the shadows of eternal death, have upon them the sense of urgency in the delivery of their message to their brethren; they have in their hearts for their fellows the pity of those who have known. The "Once-born" may minister with love and kindness, it is only the "Twice-born" who feel the pressure of the Atonement, who can in the sublimity of their self-giving wish themselves "Anathema from Christ" for their brethren.

The message that we have is as the message of the sunlight to the dark places of the earth—God has revealed himself, Jesus is here. If we would bear any effective message to others we must have found that true for ourselves. We cannot effectively preach other men's religion; we can only effectively preach our own. Only converted men, whether in pulpits or out of them, can preach the Gospel of a great deliverance. Perhaps it is because there are so many unconverted men and women in our churches, that we find the Gospel of sunlight and fresh air and pure water a tolerable expression of the Gospel of him who found the burden of men's sins so heavy that he was in agony in the bearing of them, and his sweat was as it

were great drops of blood running down to the ground. The Gospel of the sunlight is the Gospel of those to whom sin is meaningless, and atonement for sin a theological figment. There are large sections of society which find such a Gospel a pleasant substitute for the "terror of the Lord" wherewith the Apostle "persuaded men." Smug respectability, wealth of doubtful origin, social life which has thrown off the restraints of "puritanism," find not intolerable a religion whose demands can be satisfied, not by that "Godly sorrow that worketh repentance," but by checks for social service. But sin, lawlessness, contempt of law and authority, hatred of anything that is in the nature of criticism, increases and will increase; for if we can corrupt society by money, we cannot thereby reform it. The grace of God which alone can make this world better cannot be "purchased by money."

Never was there greater need of outspokenness in the presentation of the Gospel of Christ than there is to-day. Never was there greater need to insist that the religion of Jesus is the religion of the Cross, and that the need of the human soul which it comes to minister to is the need of salvation. This needs to be preached to the girls who haunt our streets at night, and to the boys in bars and gambling dens, who fancy that they are beginning to "see life": yes, but it needs most of all to

be preached in churches where well dressed and respectable people are lulled to the sleep of spiritual death by the superstition that they can be saved by philanthropy, by philosophy, by aesthetics. The burden of Jesus' preaching was, "repent ye and believe the Gospel." That message has grown very dim in these times. If the kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of God and his Christ there is need that they be once more confronted with their own wickedness, their alienation from God, by the Gospel call to repentance—a call smothered by no veils of apology, softened by no dextrous adaptation to the lives of luxurious sinners, emasculated by no removal of its sterner elements; but a call, plain and naked in its simple depiction of the hatred of God for sin, and his love for sinners. That Gospel has never lost its power. It is as powerful to-day as ever it was. When is the Church going to resume the preaching of it? When is it going to stop speaking to men of the twentieth century as though they were saints whose chief obligation is to show their sanctity by liberal contributions, and speak to them, as our Lord and his Apostles spoke to men, as those who need salvation through the limitless grace of God?

Are we ready to face the world and life as those who have experienced this limitless grace, who have found salvation in Christ, and attained peace



“through the blood of his Cross?” Surely if we have “gone in” through him to the joys of the redeemed life, that life of intimate union with him in which his will has become our will, and his mind our mind, and we have in all respects offered our lives to him as the medium of his self-manifestation: then we are ready to “go out” and bear our witness to the “truth as it is in Jesus,” to the truth that “God is in Christ,” “reconciling the world unto himself.” We know this because we have found God in Christ and have been reconciled to him. That is the very heart of our experience. Are we not bound to speak of this; nay, are we not glad to speak of this, to those of the children of our Father who have lost their way? You shrink from producing your own personal experience: but that is the one effective and completely unanswerable argument for the truth of the gospel. It is not at all like speaking of your own virtues—you would naturally not do that. One does not speak of what one has given to others, but one is glad to speak of what others have given to us. Thus we should be glad to tell of our Lord’s gifts to us—his gift of pardon, his gift of himself in our communions, the richness of his answers to our prayers. That we have found peace and go in and out in him and find pasture—this will bring hope and encourage-

ment to other souls. If only we can learn to do it simply and naturally, speak of our Friend as of other friends. One dislikes to think of the many souls one has not helped in the course of one's life, souls that were sent us by God that we might speak to them of him. And we missed the moment, and it did not come again. There are only certain moments when we can helpfully speak, for there needs a certain receptivity in the souls that we speak to. If we are spiritually alert we perceive the moment. You have known it in such and such a case; you saw the need, you felt a certain pleading of the other that you would help, the words trembled on your lips and then you did not say them, but said some other thing which shattered the tension of the sympathy and forfeited the opportunity and it has never returned. Such moments are among one's bitterest memories, are they not? We stood then in the very place of our Lord, with his message committed to us,—and we failed. What matter of repentance! God grant that we may not be met by their reproachful eyes at the last great day!


“I say to thee, do thou repeat  
To the first man thou mayest meet  
In lane, highway, or open street,  
That he, and we, and all men move  
Under a canopy of love  
As broad as the blue sky above.”

## I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I Am the Good Shepherd.

*Let us try to picture to ourselves—*

OUR Lord preaching. There is a crowd gathered here by the lakeside and our Lord has gone into Peter's boat and sits there talking to the people. See their faces eagerly turned to him. They have heard much instruction in religion from the authorized teachers of their nation, but it has not been at all like this. The Scribes explain God's law. Jesus explains God. If once he can make God plain to them they will be ready to obey him. The reason men do not obey God is because they do not succeed in seeing him, but only some caricature of him. When once we see God all desire to disobey passes. That is

why our Lord talks about the Father rather than about the law. He wants them to see what God is like rather than what God commands. And they will learn what God is like as they learn of Jesus. He is the complete expression of the Father's mind. The Jews were so lost in a false reverence of God that they would not even speak the Divine Name. Our Lord speaks plainly and simply of God as one whom they ought to know. They filled men with fear lest they should break one of the least of his commandments; Jesus filled men with love so that they longed to be like the Father. When men fear to break God's law they will invent ways of keeping the letter of it while violating its spirit; but when men love God their Father they will be careful to hold to the very spirit of all his commands. With what different feelings we hear the words, *Lawgiver*, and *Father*? That marks the passing from the attitude of the Scribe to that of the Christian.

*Consider, first —*

That as our Lord's eyes move over these upturned faces, he reads the souls that are mirrored there. He will shape his teaching to the needs of these souls. Our Lord's teaching is always personal, directed to perceived needs. Did you ever study the faces of a crowd? Each face is the record

of a history. We can read some of the coarser indications; we can see hardness, and cruelty, and debauchery, and pride, written there. But the subtler indications are beyond our ken. Our Lord saw them. When he read men's thoughts it was, no doubt, in the reflection of their thoughts upon their faces. What a piteous thing a crowd must have been to him: the record of all the hideous forms of sin by which men may insult the will and scorn the love of God, with here and there some relieving marks of a virtue, some traces of an aspiration, some foot-print of an accomplished service. Here is that field where he must sow the seed of the Gospel—the way-side, the rock, the thorns, the good ground. Consider, that our Lord shows no hesitation or failure of hope as he goes about this task. One would think that the faces might have imposed silence; but they only call out love and sympathy. So it has been ever since—the work of the Gospel has been the teaching of multitudes whose spiritual history is written on their sin-worn faces; ever trying to find expressions of the truth that will penetrate to the sin-hardened consciences, and reveal to them the truth about the Father—that the Father himself loveth them and willeth that they shall come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

*Consider, second —*

In the crowds that listen to him our Lord sees your face, and reads in it your spiritual history. He is interested in it—that is the great fact for you; and he reveals the interest of the Father. We often find difficulty in grasping that fact. We can think of the Father as interested in humanity; of our Lord as coming to save humanity. But that thought may leave us unmoved, that thought is not *energetic* enough. Can you think of the Father as interested in you; of our Lord as having come to save you? What will give vitality to our religion, is just that perception of personal interest. Our Lord is interested in your personal history, in the failures and accomplishments of your life. He has some personal words for you. Much of our success in the spiritual life depends on our finding that personal word. That is the Gospel message for me. We read our Gospel and we lay it down again with a feeling that we are familiar with that chapter which we have been reading; it is a beautiful chapter, but it does not mean any more to me to-day than it did when I read it the last time; nothing new or personal has come out of it. That spells failure, does it not? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” And somehow, to-day, we have had no hearing ear. For, can we doubt it?



there was some special word there for us. We know how it is when it finds us, that "winged word"; that word of warning, of rebuke, of encouragement, of hope; how it comes with a sense of direct message, so that there is no doubt that the Holy Spirit has spoken, has taken of the things of Christ and shown them unto us. Would that we might never close our Bibles except that word come.

*Let us, then, pray —*

That our Lord may seek us and find us and reveal himself to us, and that we may not let him go except he bless us.

Show the light of Thy countenance upon us, O Lord, that the going forth of Thy word may give light and understanding, to nourish the hearts of the simple; and that while our desire is set on Thy commandments, we may receive with open heart the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The sight we so often meet on country roads, and which rises to the mind when the sheep-flock is spoken of, is quite different from what our Lord had in mind when he made the shepherd and his flock the symbol of the relation between himself and his people. We recall a huddled and bewild-

ered flock driven along the dusty highway by men and boys and dogs, to me always a very pathetic sight and the reverse of inspiring. But to our Lord a shepherd meant a man going out of the pasture lands followed by a flock with which his relation was intimate and familiar. He had lived with his sheep till there was a mutual knowledge: "my sheep hear my voice; and I know them and they follow me."

Hence he could take the shepherd as a figure of himself. He is the leader, not the driver, of the flock. Our Lord's leadership manifests infinite patience, and long-suffering, as indeed does all God's dealing with us. As we look back into our own experience one of the things which must surely strike us is the long-suffering of God. Our attitude toward God has been that of petulant children, impatient of life's discipline and not seeking to understand it, only anxious to be rid of any limitations which discipline imposes, set upon the accomplishment of our own wills. We can see now in the light of our subsequent spiritual experience much of the stupidity and sin that marred our lives; and we wonder at our escape into anything like a godly life; but what we most of all wonder at is the patience of God which has prevented him from leaving our lives to their devices, to wreck themselves upon whatever rock they chose to mistake

for the Fortunate Isles, to be shattered by whatever storm of passion we thought it the inalienable liberty of our manhood or womanhood to indulge in. We find now that through it all the eye of the Good Shepherd was upon us, his rod and his staff ready for our needs.

There have been dark days in the Church when those who represent Christ as the Shepherd of his flock have forgotten the gentleness of Christ and the manner of his dealing: when they have substituted the drive of intolerance for the attraction of the luminous character of the divinely patient Shepherd. But the only kind of leadership which in the long run is effective, is the leadership of spiritual enlightenment which goes before the flock to show the way. Are not some, at least of the troubles of the Church at present due to the fact that its leadership does not inspire the highest confidence? One is conscious of belonging to a flock, bewildered and uncertain in many matters, which looks to its natural leaders for help and comfort and finds in them harassed men of business, or timid men, anxious to keep peace at all costs, or obviously confused men who attempt no leadership at all. Here and there, to be sure, is a man with a purpose to rule, but to rule by the imposition of his own will, displaying the spirit of one who drives, and reminding one of the Western farmer getting

his flock to the market, not of the Good Shepherd who goes before his sheep.

What the church needs to-day, we are widely told, is more authority; meaning thereby power to enforce submission to discipline of some kind. To me, force seems the most futile thing in the world, effecting at most an unconvinced and hollow uniformity. All the vagaries of individualism are better than the level of an intellectual desert that is misnamed peace. What we sorely need is not more authority, but authority of a different order. I believe that human beings, self-willed as they are, are ready to follow a leader who appeals to them through the spiritual ideals of the Gospel, who gives them the spectacle, not of a great politician, or a great man of business, but of a great Christian. You can never make the individual members of any group of men, no matter with what care selected and combined, think alike in all respects. Charles the Fifth, after he had for years exerted all the power of his Empire in the vain attempt to reduce Europe to a rigid and uniform ecclesiastical system, gave up the attempt and spent his declining years tinkering clocks. He found that he could make no two clocks run together for any length of time. If he had started life as a clock-tinker instead of so ending it, Europe might have been spared much of blood and tears. But men can be

drawn to tolerance and peace through the attraction of splendid ideals; they can be brought to see that their inevitable divergencies of thought are of less importance than the unity of ideal which is present in all who seek sanctity through union with Incarnate God. As the lives of individual Christians recede deeper and deeper into the past we note that it is that which in life divided them which tends to lose importance and vanish; and that that which abides is that which united them to our Lord and to one another. An Augustine, a Francis, a Vincent de Paul, a Laud, a Ken, a Law, a Newman, a Keble, a Pusey, stand out to-day in our minds detached from the clouds and smoke of contemporary controversy, as men who embody, with whatever personal variation, the life experience of their Master. And we can see that it was their single-hearted devotion to that Master which made their lives significant in the annals of Christendom. A man's significance to the Church, and his true call of leadership, will ultimately have to be measured by what of Christ there was in him. We are ready, are we not? to trust any man in whom we see that the place of leader means going before the flock in the spirit of the Good Shepherd, and whose ambition is the ambition to make Christ better known, who is determined to know nothing among us but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

All this of course is not to say that it is of no importance what we think, or believe. It is of great and permanent importance what we think and believe: but beyond that is the importance of *how* we think and believe it—of what spirit we are of. I myself have arrived at certain convictions as the result of many years spent in seeking the truth. I hold those convictions with all the strength of my being. I cannot conceive of their being shaken. But I am not therefore inclined to make them the measure of other men. The truth of God is too great and many sided to be fully comprehended by any one mind; it has too many facets for a single mind to gather all its light. We need therefore to hold the truth we have gained, not in indifference, but in love: asking ourselves what is the effect of truth in life. Does the truth men claim to possess create in them the Spirit of Jesus, or does it create the spirit of intolerance and uncharity? The denunciation of others can be no healthy growth from the truth that we possess. If what we think to be truth is really such, and we have assimilated it, the outcome will be that we see our Lord more clearly and have a better understanding of his mind. The more people differ from us and denounce us, the more we shall be led to tolerance and patience and long-suffering. The motto we shall have before us is: "when he was reviled, he reviled not again;



when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously." We shall "seek by well-doing to put to silence," not only, "the ignorance of foolish men," but the misjudgments and intolerance of learned men. We need to remember that the faith a man actually lives by is quite often a different faith from that which he professes. If we hold the Catholic faith and do not live the Catholic life of love and service and patience, there is something vitally wrong with the method of our holding it.

It is well, therefore, in our appreciation of the Catholic faith to apply it first of all to ourselves. Our instinctive tendency is to apply it to others. I suppose we very rarely detach ourselves from the mass of people and see ourselves alone before God, under his eye. That is essential to our getting to know ourselves, as distinguished from our theory about ourselves. Theory and truth in this matter, I suppose, are never exactly equivalent, but our constant effort must be to make them match. That is what self-examination and meditation are intended to bring about—to individualize the application of our faith. Faith without works, that is, results in life, is dead. We must think, not of sinners, but of this sinner; not of liars, but of this liar; not of uncharitable persons, but of this uncharitable person. It is easy to condemn sin, and

rather useless, unless we condemn it as we have identified ourselves with it. Our own weakness is not infrequently the result of some tolerated, half-perceived sin in ourselves.

“Perchance some rotten root of sin in thee,  
Has made thy garden cease to bloom and glow:  
Hast thou no need from thine ownself to flee?”

To seek thus to individualize our faith is to stress our personal relation to our Lord. It is this relation that he brings out in the parable of the Good Shepherd. He here emphasizes his relation to men as an individual relation. “I know my sheep.” That goes very deep. There is much of consolation in this truth that we are known of our Lord, that we are not lost in the flock, but that his eye notes the peculiarity of the individual soul. We shrink a little, perhaps, from the thought that all that we are he knows—that he sees through all that I seem to myself to be, or would be thought to be, or even pretend to be. We have doubts at times of ourselves—what is the depth, the sincerity, the reality of our religion? But he has no doubts; he is certain when we are not. “I know my sheep.”

But when we think into it far enough there is much consolation in this thought that our Lord knows us. I am never quite sure that I know my-

self, never quite certain of the purity of my motive—that there is not some selfish consideration creeping in and vitiating my action. I am haunted by doubts of my singleness of purpose. By the way, it is strange we are so ready to judge the actions of others when we cannot get final certainty as to our own! I tremble when I have to make important decisions lest my reading of the mind of our Lord be clouded by the impulse of my own will. But where we are thus hesitant, our Lord knows. He knows what is in man, down to his most hidden impulses, his most secret motives. This is ground for rejoicing, for however bad I am, however much of a failure I may seem myself, it would be neither consolation nor help to think that our Lord did not know. It is just because he does know that he can help. He sees my failures; but he also sees my limitations, my incapacity, my weakness. And because he sees my case thus thoroughly he can help. He is master of the case; he provides for each special need.

For it is only because our Lord knows that he can effectively provide. We rely on his Providence with perfect trust, because we are sure of his perfect love and wisdom in dealing with us. If we have become sure of this there can be no rebellion against his Providence. How much of the unrest of our lives comes from this, that we do not

accept the providential ordering of life as being the thing that is best for us—the thing that we need—that the divine Wisdom has fitted, if I may so express it, the frame about our lives that best brings out the meaning of the picture; that he has given us just such a measure of discipline, as is best suited to the formation of our spiritual character. St. Paul throws light on this problem when he says: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." It emphasizes this important fact, that the effect of God's providential action is conditioned by the spirit in which we receive it. As the presence of some element in one's physical nature will change that which is to most men food to poison for us; so the presence of an adverse spiritual disposition will change the intended blessings of God's providence to spiritual disaster. What might have been accepted thankfully, or at least submissively, as a means of discipline for our lives, being rejected with impatience and rebellion, turns to a stumbling block and means of offence. If the presence of Christ among men did very effectively judge them, revealing through the attitude they took toward him the actual state of their souls; if his arraignment before human tribunals was less a judgment of him than of Caiaphas, of Herod, of Pilate; so the presence of God to-day in the providential setting of our lives is a constant

judgment of those lives in that it reveals their inner meaning, calls out into the daylight what is their spiritual worth. Calls it out not that God might see—he knows already—but that we may see and know ourselves. It is the goodness of God leading us to repentance. While our lives are going on passively we are able to make ourselves believe that our profession of religion is a true and loyal allegiance to the will of God, that we love our Lord and are devoted to his service. We sit calmly under our gourd and thank God for the shade of it. But when the worm eats it and it withers and we are left exposed to the blazing sun, we are angry; we protest that “we do well to be angry even unto death.” But such dealing with us does not reveal God as a hard task-master exacting to the uttermost the tale of bricks; it does not show him as a grasping householder, gathering where he has not strewed; but as the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep—knows them far better than they know themselves. He is then the Good Physician revealing the disease which is silently eating out the spiritual life. He reveals tares where we had all along thought wheat was growing. And that revelation of the self which praised God only because it was comfortable and at ease, but is harsh and bitter and resentful when God “touches his

bone and his flesh," is God's method of telling us that our life needs change of some sort.

It is the call to repentance; but it is not always that. We need not to make the inference that discipline is the revelation of unknown sinfulness. Whether it is or no will become obvious from our way of meeting it. If we meet it, as I said, with bitterness and rebellion, then sin that we did not suspect is made manifest: but if we meet it with no such spirit, but rather rejoice that we "are counted worthy to suffer" for him, then we may be sure that the will of the Good Shepherd is leading us on to greater perfectness. What we are being called to is closer union with the life of our crucified Lord. What is being offered us is a greater share in his Cross. In the narrative of our Lord's passion a certain man "who passed by, coming out of the country" was seized and made to bear our Lord's cross. How like an accident that seems—the mere sport of chance. We can imagine the astonishment of the man, his fear, his rebellion. What had he to do with all this? But are we wrong in seeing in this "chance," this "piece of bad luck," the very thing that brought the man to the knowledge of Jesus and the salvation that is in him? The way in which he is mentioned by St. Mark implies that he and his family were well known in the Christian community when the Gos-



pel was written. The accidents of life, the luck, good or bad, which befalls us, they are significant items in God's dealing with us, voices of the Good Shepherd calling us, means which God uses to win us and to call us into closer union with himself.

Wherever I am, if I am there by God's will and not through my own self-will, there it is best for me to be, and to abide till God's will made known to me sends me elsewhere. I am put into a place of great responsibility; but if I am certain that God placed me there, let me meet the responsibilities of the place, quietly and humbly as the servant of God. I am left in obscurity; that, then, is the best place for me, and I do not murmur. The kind of life God assigns me is the kind I need in order to work out my salvation. There, and not elsewhere, can I attain my highest spiritual development. That is the answer to our restlessness under the circumstance of life. Hardness or ease, pain or joy, he placed me there. He knows, and I, knowing that he knows, do not try to see "the distant way," being content with the "one step" that I do see. But I do know that the way ends in the Unveiled Presence—the Presence that, being veiled, is with me here and now—"Are we not all guests of Allah?" says the Arab of the desert, as he welcomes the stranger to his tent and showers upon him all that hospitality can suggest. The sim-

ple words well indicate the situation. 'Guests of Allah' are we all on our very entrance into the world, and 'guests of Allah' we remain to the close of our sojourn. We are partakers of a store that we have not prepared, spectators of a beauty we have not conceived or executed, and sharers in a glory we only dimly understand.' "

Thou hast been with me in the dark and cold,  
And all the night I thought I was alone:  
The chariots of Thy glory round me rolled,  
On me attending, yet by me unknown.

Clouds were Thy chariot, and I knew them not;  
They came in solemn thunders to my ear;  
I thought that far away Thou hadst forgot,—  
But Thou wert by my side, and heaven was near.

Why did I murmur underneath the night,  
When night was spanned by golden steps to Thee?  
Why did I cry disconsolate for light,  
When all Thy stars were bending over me?

The darkness of my night hast been Thy day;  
My stony pillow was Thy ladder's rest;  
And all Thine angels watched my couch of clay  
To bless the soul, unconscious it was blest.

If in these truths we have found the stuff of our guidance, it is because of some kinship with our Lord, some mutual knowledge. "I know my sheep and am known of mine." This is deeper than

knowing about. The kind of knowledge we have of our Lord, which leads us to hear his voice and follow him, is not communicated knowledge about him, but is knowledge born of the inner sympathy, which results from having the same aim, the same mind. If this were not so, we might be driven, we should never follow. Let us pause for a moment and think just how such knowledge as we have of our Lord has come to us. There has been, of course, the external teaching about him which is as the sign-board that directs our steps in the right way. There has been the effect of that teaching seen in the lives of others, which has been to us an indication of its truth and efficacy. But our knowledge contains other strands beside. What we value most has come to us out of the experience of life, out of our consciousness of God's personal action in our soul. There are truths that have been transmitted in our experience so that they have become in a special sense ours. To take but one example: we have all of us, I fancy, learned the *strength of dependence*, that truth that St. Paul states when he says, "when I am weak, then am I strong." We started life in the spirit of self-sufficiency which is a part of the equipment of youth; and then life closed in upon us and we experienced failure after failure. And out of this "spoiling of our goods" we came to know that self-sufficiency is

weakness, and that we must be controlled and supported if we are to make any sort of success of life. We have ceased to look on life as a field of easy conquests, and to murmur "who is sufficient for these things?" In our failure we have been driven back to God as the ultimate and real source of strength: our lives have become trusting and faithful—"all my fresh springs shall be in thee." Perhaps we cannot follow every step of this transmutation, or tell how or when it took place. But we know that it has taken place and that our mature experience is one of humility and trust where once there had been the pride of self-reliance. To this extent Christ has been formed in us: so far we know him and his power.

Again and again as we have progressed in the power of spiritual living this process of transmutation has been repeated, whereby a truth of teaching has passed into an acquired truth of the inner life. In some instances we have yielded readily enough to our Lord's guidance, and have been glad of the conviction that came. But other cases have presented difficulty, and our nature has shrunk back when we saw whither we were being led—for the Good Shepherd leads us out into places where naturally we would not go. That, of course, is the inner meaning of guidance—that we are enticed by our trust in a higher wisdom, we

are drawn on by "the bands of love." It is the sight of One going on before that arouses us and brings us to action. With our eyes fixed on the Good Shepherd we can forget at times where the path runs and be conscious only of following him. It is well if this be so with us, and the burden of the way be lightened because we are sustained by love. For the path that begins in the meadows and runs by the still waters goes outward and upward, till there is revealed a hill in the distance, and on the hill stands a Cross.

Are we ready to follow as far as that? Or are we going to stop where the road slopes upward? "I lay down my life for the sheep." Are we ready to go as far as that? There are many ways of laying down the life; every life must find some way, must it not? "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." We must find some way of losing ourselves in self-identification with our Lord. "My sheep follow me"—into what paths of service?

May I say a word here, not to everyone, but to any one into whose hands this book may fall whose life is still free to be offered wholly to our Lord in a specially consecrated service? There are those whom our Lord calls to be in a very special way his ministers to others, either in a life of service

or in a life of prayer. Of such we say they have vocation, whether it be to the priesthood or the religious life, or to some other special form of service. To such our Lord's words may be applied in a very special sense "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." And yet such is the "disquietude of this world," with its many disturbing voices, that it is sadly possible for the call to come and go by unheeded. It comes ordinarily through the circumstances of our life. The young find life opening before them and that they are free to choose its direction. The Providence of God has "set their feet in a large room." They experience the exhilaration of freedom—that "the world is all before them"; or they feel responsibility for it, the responsibility to direct well their choice. In such cases the soul offers itself to our Lord in an act of self-consecration that is perfectly definite—offers itself to his holy will to be guided to a choice for future which shall be in accord with that will. And then *it should listen*, repeating the act of self-oblation from time to time, especially at the times of its communion. We should always assume under such circumstances that God wants a special service from us. It may be a service "in the world," as we say; or it may be that he would have us "sell all and follow him." We have no right to make our natural impulses and



desires the test in such a case, or assume that we are not "fitted" for a life of special service. Still less have we the right to make the opinions of worldly friends and relatives the test. We should in the first instance listen only to God, and if he "puts into our minds good desires," if the thought of special consecration grows in force and clearness while we pray day by day for guidance, while we offer ourselves with growing intensity, we must heed this as the voice of the Divine Shepherd calling his sheep. We must yield ourselves, and pray, "draw me and we will run after thee." We should do well for a while not to complicate our seeking by looking to the distracting of voices of human opinion and advice. As vocation is so purely personal a transaction between God and the soul it is best kept free from other intervention till the time comes when we need the expert advice that shall guide our final decision. The experience of many years has convinced me that vocations are frequently stifled and frustrated by the asking of advice of ignorant or interested persons at a period when the soul should be simply submitting itself to God. For our Lord does not, "strive, nor cry," but his voice comes to us through the silence of our prayers, in the hush of our communions in the moments when we have "swept and garnished" the house of our life, and are quietly holding open

the door that he may come in. "Behold," he says, "I stand at the door and knock"; but the knocking is so gentle that the sound of it may be drowned in the shouting of our passions, in the tumult of a life that has made the world its guest. He forces no one's freedom, he compels no one to serve, he constrains no one's love: but there is a wistfulness in his voice when he says, "*If any one willeth to come after me*"—and if anyone *does* will, then he holds out to them the priceless guerdon of his service, the privilege of union with him in his redemptive work, the high reward of bearing after him his Cross. It is sad to think how many lives he has fashioned for this service and called to the privileges of the ministry have let the call pass unnoticed, and in their heedlessness or in their fear "have fled and hid themselves among the stuff" of world-consecrated interests.

"I lay down my life for the sheep." We, if we are faithful, will follow thus far, finding some form of self-giving by which we render our lives back to him. But we are liable to stop there in thought—to stop at the point where we have gone up Calvary with him and have seen the Cross. That misunderstanding of the Cross as the final phase of our spiritual experience is one of the mistakes which gives to the life of the Christian an aspect of unnecessary hardness. *The Cross is not a stop-*

*ping place.* It was not final in our Lord's life, nor can it be final in ours. The path leads up the hill where the Cross rises upon the summit; but when we get there we find that the path does not end at the foot of the Cross but leads on over the hill. From the Cross-crowned summit there is revealed to us the vine-covered slopes and the valleys that laugh and sing in all the splendor of the Promised Land. "I lay down my life that I might take it again, I have the power to lay down, and I have the power to take it again."

And we follow to the end, beyond the Cross to the Risen Life. The Risen Life is not altogether future to us, we enter upon it even now, because we are even now in Christ and have a share in all his experience. It is an imperfect view of the Christian life which only sees it as crucified. We are not only crucified with Christ, but we are risen with him,—we are risen and ascended and lifted up to dwell with him in heavenly places. We are already, if we have been found faithful, entered upon our Lord's life of triumph. He triumphs in us and we triumph in him. This is not a mystic piece of symbolism but the plain fact of the Christian life, a matter of daily experience, if we will have it so. The power and presence of the Risen and Ascended Jesus has entered our lives and we triumph thereby. We triumph over pain, over

sin, over fear, over death. If we are using our Lord's presence our days are marked, not by defeat, but by victories. Sin and failure are not the characteristic features of the life of the Christian, but rather its conquests. We are conquering one by one the temptations that beset us, we are winning one by one the virtues that are in him. Not fear and shame and sorrow, but joy and gladness are in the "dwellings of the righteous," and our lives expand with the happy consciousness of our victories. We go on our way rejoicing, as pilgrims of hope, and at the end it shall be written of us as of St. Francis, "he died singing." This is the true following of Christ, which follows to where he is now in the joy of his triumph. And we can so follow because we are not alone—he is with us all the time.

In pastures green? Not always; sometimes He  
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me  
By weary ways, where heavy shadows be.

And by still waters? No; not always so;  
Oft-times the heavy tempests round me blow,  
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.

But when the storm is loudest, and I cry  
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by  
And whispers to my soul, "Lo, it is I."

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,  
"Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,  
In every path of thine I lead the way."

So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair  
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys where  
The shadows lie—what matter? He is there.





## I AM THE VINE.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I Am the Vine.

*And let us picture to ourselves—*

THE meeting of a Christian congregation in that early time when the Church was suffering persecution. It is in the house of some well-to-do member of the Church, situated, we will imagine, in the suburbs of the city. It is early dawn, and the light is streaming up the Eastern sky, touching the hill-tops with rose and silver; but down here in the valley it is still dark, the shapes of things are indistinct shadows. Men are coming hastily, yet with silent steps, to the gate of the Villa, through which they pass, after accustomed signs to the guardian, and go into the room prepared for their worship. It is a strange group seen here in the lamp-light, a group in which social dis-

tion has no place. Here, alone in the world perhaps, you can see men and women of all states of life, not simply gathered into one place, but fused by some invisible power into a unity. Master and slave, soldier and civilian, patrician and proletarian, they are all one by some subtle bond that they all feel and act upon. They are lifted out of their individual separateness and knit together in a higher unity. See them, as the bishop and his attendant clergy come forth and take their places about the Holy Table, become eagerly attentive to his words, joining in prayer and response, as moved by a common impulse. There is one spirit in this Body whose members are so divided in the outer world to which they will presently go back; and we gather, as the service goes on, that this spirit is a response to some unseen Presence that they all feel and are certain of; a Presence that tends more and more to localize itself at the Holy Table where the Sacred Symbols are set out before the bishop—a Presence which grows in distinctness till it culminates at the reception of the Elements in a sense of personal possession and joy.

*Consider, first —*

That this culmination of the service in participation in the Communion is the key to the understanding of the unity that we feel among these

men and women. They are one, and they feel that they are one, because they have been gathered into unity with their living Master. What we have been looking at is no act of commemoration of a dead Lord, but is intelligible only as it is filled with a living Presence. Jesus lives. Jesus is here; and his Incarnate Life has outspread and embraced all these and gathered them into union with himself. Their perception of union one with another is the result of their being in him. And because they are in him, they have been raised to a higher equality, in the presence of which the low inequalities of human society vanish. There are here no distinctions; no rich nor poor; no bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus. They have been baptised into the One Body, and are become partakers of the One Bread. And their sense of their unity is so vital a thing that it will not vanish when they separate after the Blessing and go forth, in the now full light of the morning, to their various vocations. They will carry the sense of their relation with them, and when they meet in the street, in the market place, in the service of the house, there will be a smile on the lips and a light will pass from eye to eye. The master will receive the service of the slave with a sense of the redeemed manhood and simple human dignity of the servant which will make him gentle and grateful for the

service rendered. The slave will offer his service as from brother to brother, in the memory of him who was among his brethren as one that serveth. This which seems to us impossible, was then possible because of the deep sense of the brotherhood in Christ as affecting all life in all its relations, and not, as with us, certain corners of life labelled "religious."

*Consider, second—*

That is the misery of our present state, that we have lost all the keenness of the sensation of unity. We have obliterated the sharpness of the definition between the Church and the world, and in doing so have lost the sense of belonging one to another because we first belong to Christ. Let us be frank with ourselves: have we resumed the sense of social and class distinction that the first enthusiasm of the Gospel obliterated among those who formed the early Christian assemblies? Is there any definite content to the notion "brother" in our minds? Do we feel drawn to others because they are Christians, members of the same congregation, worshipping at the same altar, receiving the same sacraments? Do we make any attempt to know our brothers and sisters? Do we ever go into any house and say we have come because we are of the same faith? Are we even interested in the work

that certain other members of the same family of God are trying to do? Do the clergy of the Church get ready sympathy and help from us in their work, or do we treat it as a matter that is no concern of ours? If we are obliged to answer such questions as these in a way that we feel certain that no member of the congregation we have been thinking of would have answered, what does brotherhood mean to us—anything? Conditions of life, no doubt, change; but have they changed in such wise as to justify the present lack of interest in one another which characterises the modern Christian congregation? “The brother for whom Christ died” is as much a reality to-day as in the first century. Is he a reality to you in your daily life? To whom does the common participation in the benefits of the Passion and Death of Christ link you?

*Let us, then, pray—*

For an increased sense of the unity of the members of the Church one with another. Let us pray that we may find in our faith a bond of union with all that share it.

Bless, O Lord and Father, Thy Family, Redeemed by the Precious Blood of Thy dear Son, and enlightened by the Gift of Thy Holy Spirit, and fill them with Thy Spiritual gifts; grant them love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness,

hope, faith, charity; that being replenished with all Thy gifts, they may attain their desire of coming safe unto Thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Saviour.

When our Lord describes his relation to us under the symbol of the vine and branches he is attempting to convey to us some notion of the central mystery of the Christian life, the mystery of our union with him. I have been, and no doubt in the future shall be, so insistent on this, the basal fact of our religion, that I am not now going to dwell on the fact itself, but rather on some deductions from it. It is a fact so rich and significant in practical application, that we can make no pretensions to exhaust its meaning, but can only lightly touch upon the borders of it.

Let us think, then, in the first place, of our spiritual life as a dependent and derived life. Just as the stream depends every moment of its existence upon the fountain, and will dry up if the fountain ceases to send forth the waters which are its life, so we depend on Christ, who is the inexhaustible source of our spirit's energy. Or, to return to our Lord's own symbol, the twigs and leaves and flowers of the vine are each moment living and growing by virtue of the life-giving sap that flows forth to them from the central trunk. Spiritual health,



spiritual strength, spiritual existence are impossible apart from Christ.

If at any moment the vital connection between the vine and the branch is interrupted the effect on the branch is disastrous. The energy is reduced or abolished, and it at once tends toward death. Nothing can save it except the removal of the obstruction and the restitution of the circulation. That which impedes or entirely interrupts the vital connection between our spirits and the source of our spirit's life, is sin. Hence the importance of sin and inevitability of the stress laid upon it in Christian teaching. It is possible to think of sin lightly, and to speak of it as of small consequence, only if we neglect its necessary effect in interrupting the action of the spiritual life by severing it from its source. And just because sin has this importance it is necessary in our thought of it to see where its evil lies, and lay our emphasis in the right place.

I am inclined to think that in our thought of sin we dwell too much upon it as it is a violation of law. Our thought naturally tends to legalism, and to rest in the superficial fact of the breaking of law as a sufficient account of sin and of God's attitude toward it. The Supreme Law-giver, we call God; thereby, through a poor analogy, getting one of the most imperfect conceptions of God we could gain.

There will always remain in our conception of law an element of arbitrariness, the feeling that the law might have been otherwise, and if so, the guilt of breaking the law will seem less. But the laws of God are the self-expression of God and could not be otherwise; and that puts the violation of the law or sin on some deeper basis than just the violation of an arbitrary enactment. We ask, why is the violation of a divine law so disastrous? Because it exposes us to penalty? That is one side of it, certainly: but a limited side, unless you attach some extended meaning to the word penalty. Because it is a breach of sympathy showing that the sinner is no longer in sympathy with the thought of God? Yes, that is included, and is disastrous. But there is a significance of sin deeper than that. The most complete account of it is that it is a hindrance to the operation of the Divine Life. The life that flows forth from our Lord and is imparted to us that we may live in him and by him, is obstructed in its action by the operation of sin. Sin is an interruption of the life of union. The water is dammed back in the fountain; the sap is driven back to the roots.

The branch is cut off and withered—that is what we call mortal sin. What a terrible thing it is to look at—that withered branch! It had once been in the vine, a part of the vine's life. It had had the power of growth and fruitfulness. That soul

was once a Christian soul, was once full of the life of grace, once fruitful in good works. And see it now! How dead and cold it is! And yet we may not recognize the state of the man for what it is, and the man himself may not recognize it. That is one of the awful things about death, that the dead thing has ceased to feel. The dead soul has ceased to feel any reproach of the conscience, any need of God. It has become indifferent to all the work of Christ for it, impatient of all the appeals of religion. Very likely it is filled with intellectual conceit, with a sense of superiority to the Gospel of Jesus. It sneers at the virtues of the Christian life as the qualities of weaklings. It looks back at the days when it followed the religion of Jesus as days of superstition from which it is now happily emancipated.

We are not in that state. We cannot be in that state so long as we are, however feebly, attempting to follow the guidance of the Spirit to a better life. But there is in the experience of those who are, on the whole, making some effort to live Christianly, an approach to this state of mortal sin—a drift toward it. This is the state of habitual venial sin. If we are accustomed to search our conscience with any thoroughness, we have found from time to time in our lives sins that we tolerate; sins that we are not hating. Now it is one thing, through weak-

ness or surprise, or through strong temptation, to fall into sin—sin that on the whole we did not mean to commit, and quite another thing to discover in ourselves sins that we like and excuse. There may be some degree of repentance for them, there may be spasmodic struggles against them; but they remain, and on the whole they remain, because we want them to remain. They are usually not what we would call dark sins; nor sins by which we make obvious gain. There are other sins that give us a certain pleasure; sins that are the expression of some innate weakness of character. There are people, for instance, whose sense of truth is very defective; who are unable, it would seem, to appreciate the subtle gradations between truth and untruth. They are unable to narrate events accurately or to repeat statements exactly. The statement that they repeat is altered by a difference of shading, of emphasis, of tone, till the impression it conveys is utterly falsified from the original. There are those whose vividness of imagination, whose sense of the dramatic, over-rides their sense of accuracy. To them it is more important that what they tell should be effective than that it should be true. They see in an event the possibility of a good story—and why should a good story be spoiled for so small a thing as exactitude of detail? They are feebly artistic natures that tend to embellish

what passes through their hands. Then there is the genus of irresponsible talkers, mere chatterers, afflicted with an unrestrainable flow of words, who, for the most part, one fancies, do not at all know what they say : who attach no sense of responsibility to the gift of speech. They abound in gossip, and are likely to have a malicious twist in their nature that gives their gossip a sting. They are afflicted with an idle curiosity, and have a capacity for interesting themselves in the petty. There are those whose imaginations are diseased and who delight in the vulgar or the salacious, whose anecdotes touch the limits of the decent. Or, in sins of another order, think of those who are of a morbid or morose temperament ; who are suspicious of others' meaning, and are in constant expectation of being slighted or ignored or neglected ; who watch one's face or gesture or emphasis to extort from them food of offense.

I am not saying that these and the like are great sins. My point is that they are not. What I am insisting on is that they are the sort of sins that human beings treat with indulgence, if not affection, and make no adequate effort to overcome. They necessarily come before them again and again in their self-examination, unless they are spiritually blind ; and the frequency of their occurrence causes them no more than a passing twinge of conscience,

and leads to no persistent effort to change. But they are there, gnawing at the spiritual vitals, corroding the spiritual springs of life. The soul abides in a permanent state of tolerated venial sin which must be ultimately destructive of spiritual life. It may be a very small worm that is eating at the heart of the branch, but if it eats long enough the branch is cut through and falls to the ground—it no longer abides in the union of the vine.

One of the commonest symptoms of the presence of tolerated venial sin is spiritual sloth. It is spiritual sloth, indeed, born of the sin that prevents us from dealing with. And the sloth extends itself to other fields of spiritual activity. The soul becomes negligent in prayer, in preparation for its sacraments, and thus being in an unresponsive state gets no fruit of them. Duties of certain kinds that are not in themselves agreeable to the person are left undone. Thus issues what one might perhaps call a partial paralysis of the spiritual nature. Even in health, physiologists tell us, there are spots on our bodies where we do not feel at all or feel less intensely; so there seem to be in certain souls *dead spots*. There sin does not produce the reaction of conscience, or only a slight reaction. The total effect of all this is to reduce the spiritual vitality. The circulation of the life of the branch is impeded. We fall into a low spiritual condition. You have no-



ticed in a shrub, perhaps, a branch where the leaves are undergrown and the blossoms puny: you know that there will be no fruit there. You have noticed in your life, perhaps, a lack of fruit in certain places: well, it were well to look into the matter to see where the trouble lies and to find why the life of the vine is impeded in its circulation in you.

We are all of us limited in our development—otherwise we should be saints already instead of aspiring to sanctity. We have failed of any complete answer to the command, “be ye therefore perfect.” Our obligation is to be constantly seeking the meaning of our limitation and discovering remedies of it; certainly not to rest in the fact that we are already active. The self-satisfaction that is liable to accompany the doing of many *things* is one of the dangers that are ever present to the active. It leads us to confuse quantity of work with quality. So long as we are occupied we seem to be making progress. But progress in what? Activity is not the synonym of spirituality. We need to scan the nature and motive of our activity if we will know its quality, its bearing, that is to say, on our own spiritual development—whether our activity is of such a kind as to release the spiritual energy that is communicated to us, making our work a supernatural operation of grace, or whether it is but a natural activity, a response to taste or social pressure.

It is only in the former case that it is of a nature to remove or push further back the limitations which hinder our development, and make it possible for us to go on nearer to perfection.

For we are supposed to have no limitations. The Gospel assumes the possibility of all men attaining its ideal. That, we say to ourselves, is an impossible ideal. But that is just what it is not. Certainly, we have not fulfilled it: but it must remain our ideal, or our spiritual endeavor will come to a stop. Our ideal is the ideal of the perfect man; that we are to grow up to when Christ Jesus is formed in us, and the space by which we at present fall short of it, is the measure of the distance which still separates us from full conformity with our Lord. When that space is traversed we shall be at the end of our course: but now we must push forward on our pilgrimage, eager for perfection. Here as elsewhere, the true measure of life is its desire and not its accomplishment. In accomplishment we may be bettered by circumstance and hindered by the uncontrollable accidents of life: we may mistake and blunder and fail, so it seems, of any accomplishment at all; but we can hardly be mistaken about our *desires*; and they may burn intensely even when the brain and hand show themselves incompetent to carry them to effect. Sometimes, indeed, the love of our Lord which is in our

heart finds it difficult to discover any means of expression manward, and on that very account may reach more intense expression Godward. In such a case we have a life which is called of God to interior activities of love, of penance, of intercession; of which the outward effects, though difficult to estimate, are none the less of a high order. There is no spiritual activity that is resultless:

"There is no drop but serves the slowly lifting tide:  
No dew but has an errand to some flower;  
No smallest star but sheds some helpful ray."

The vine and the branches make but one body; we are not only "members of Christ," but "members one of another." While the space that this truth has filled in the thought of recent years has made it perfectly familiar to us, a mere commonplace of our speaking, it can hardly be said that it has become fundamental to our action—it has had small practical effect hitherto. It moves us speculatively and emotionally. It underlies, for instance, the vast amount of talk that there has been on the subject of peace, international and other. If we only attended meetings or read speeches we should think that the world was moving rapidly toward a state in which war would be impossible. But it is plain that we have only theoretic interest in peace, an interest in peace in matters where we are not

personally concerned. But let questions arise which touch us, and our dreams of peace go for nothing, and we make us ready for battle. We fall back into the old dialect and talk about national honor, and the impossibility of arbitration in the specific case. The same atmosphere of unreality surrounds our professions of brotherhood in our social dealings. There are large philanthropic professions: I doubt if there has ever been a time of more intense hostility between different sections of society. The Socialist movement which talks beautifully of brotherhood, yet expects to get its results through class struggle, by setting brother against brother in the bitterest of all wars. Class antagonism is capitalized to an enormous extent in the operations of labor and capital. A tremendous amount of our legislature is directed to give some financial advantage to this or that class. In the active business of life the fact that all men are brothers would seem to be quite the last thing thought of. And in our more intimate social relations is not the same thing observable? We are all brothers in our moments of expansion, when we dwell unctiously on the platitudes of speculation: but it does still make a vast difference to us how our brothers dress and eat and lodge. We do not feel the bond of brotherhood tightening between us and the man across the hotel table who has weird methods of managing his

food-supply. I have known quite eminent Christians make complaint of the odor of the tenement house children in the next pew. We are not above being repelled by peculiarities of dress.

The trouble would seem to be that in our theorizing we have left out an essential element of the problem. We have arrived at a purely human notion of brotherhood which breaks down under the strain of practical application. We have not added to it the complementary term *in Christ*, which will alone give our nation energy and make it function. Men are rather fond of borrowing truths from the gospel and then, evacuating them of their supernatural character, attempting to make them work as merely human truths. Belief in brotherhood, which is the chief asset of humanitarianism, will not work except as a part of a supernatural system. We arrive at brotherhood in the full sense by being taken into Christ, and apart from him we can do nothing in this matter. I anticipate the objection: it is true that we cannot be said to be doing very much with it in any case. But that is because we have not yet got to much social understanding of what being a Christian means. Most men are still in the stage of thinking it means being good in some personal and private sense, in some restricted sphere of activity. It seems to be possible through this artificial and non-natural restriction of the

sphere of the application of Christian principle, for a man to be good, a good member of the church, etc., while he remains the director of the company or the head of the business which is conducted on lines of oppression, or indulges in activities which are only moral if moral means legal; which does not ask, is it right, is it just, but only can it be done within the law. A Christian society, I suppose, we have never seen, nor would it appear to be within the range of telescopes of the highest power as yet invented. Individual Christianity we have seen: social Christianity—no. And that because we have not yet understood the meaning of “in Christ” as applied to all members of the Christian family.

We speak a Christian language without attributing a Christian meaning to our words. It is interesting (and disheartening) to trace this process of emasculation of Christian thought. We are very tolerant to-day: and it is difficult to take up a modern book dealing with religious or social questions which has not something to say of the intolerance of the Christian Church; at least in the past. The narrowing effects of religion we are constantly warned against. But is tolerance, which I take to be a charitable bearing with those who differ from us, without losing sight of the fact and importance of the difference, really a wide-spread virtue? I



say, a true tolerance does not exist where that which separates us is conceived as of no importance. If the contrary opinion or action of another is of no importance, what we feel is not tolerance, but indifference. And that, in fact, is what is so highly prized and so widely manifested to-day. Men are indifferent to truth, and therefore tolerant in this sense. Religious indifference is perhaps the most outstanding phenomenon of the present situation. People are intolerant of any opinion because they cannot conceive that any opinion in the matter of religion can be of importance. It makes no difference what you believe, is the foundation of the modern creed. Therefore men can look back at Middle Ages, for instance, with horror and contempt. But when you meet men holding opinions to which they really attribute importance, do you find them markedly tolerant? Let the priest who has a congregation made up from the mercantile class preach of brotherhood in the sense in which Socialists understand it, and what will happen? I know of a priest who was warned that if he accepted a certain parish he would have to keep silent on the political opinions he was known to hold—not silent in the pulpit, but silent in the ordinary relations of life. We know that there are dozens of questions which will stir the religiously tolerant man to intolerance—that one of the secrets

of successful intercourse with our brothers is knowing when to keep one's mouth shut. Human beings are just as intolerant to-day everywhere as in the Middle Ages.

Would it not be well for Christians to ask themselves how far they are using the cloak of tolerance as an excuse for their worldliness? The Christian community is invisible as such: it is inextricably mingled with the world. The line of demarkation between the church and the world was once very clear and decided. It was easy to find on which side of the line a man stood, and I do not believe that we can have any healthy church life (we may possibly maintain a healthy individual life) till we remark this difference. The coming out of the world of the early Christians was a mark of spiritual health. We avoid making any such distinction because of an utterly absurd theory that the world, society, has been converted and is now Christian. The rise of this theory was contemporaneous with the degeneration of the Church. It was when men began to talk of a Christian empire, Christian kingdoms, the Christian world, that the outlines of the Christian Church became blurred, and men thought that they could be Christian without separation from the world. Those who are Christians in anything more than a nominal sense belong to the Vine, to the Body of Christ, and the member of

Christ cannot at the same time be members of the harlot that the world is. A Christian must be known, not only as one who stands *for* something, holding a private creed that is tolerated so long as he does not press it, but as one who stands *against* something, and stands so firmly that his standing may be expected to arouse opposition. His attitude must be one of continual protest.

It is implied in the cleansing of the fruitful branch that the process of our conformity to Christ is one that ceaselessly goes on when the life is in a healthy state. The process of our moral and spiritual growth brings into evidence defects that we had not suspected and which need to be rectified through the closer application of Christian principle—spots where the soul is tarnished which need the cleansing application of a Saviour's blood. "Wash me thoroughly"—wash me more and more. The true stress of the Christian life is upon this progressive cleansing which fits us to receive and transmit more of Christ. I fancy that we do not yet dream of the possibilities of our spiritual nature, here in this world, if we were to co-operate with God in bringing it to the development it is capable of. And yet we have had before our eyes throughout the history of the church object lessons of the possibilities of spiritual action where the whole life is spiritualized by its union with our Lord. But

we insist upon regarding the results of such spiritual action with suspicion, or upon brushing them aside as manifestly false. Being Christians, we still include among the axioms that we regard as self-evident, the axiom of materialistic unbelief, "miracles do not happen,"—an axiom which we curiously suspend in its application when we are dealing with the miracles of the Bible. Just what miracles are, is, of course, largely a matter of definition, which I do not pause to discuss. The point I wish to emphasise is that the history of Christianity offers us a continuous series of phenomena—ecstasy, vision, prophecy, healings, and such dealing with the natural world as we call miraculous—which must either be rejected, as we ordinarily do reject them, as unthinkable upon our assumed premises, or accepted as the evidence of a powerful spiritual activity exerted through the lives of certain men and women. We accept the presence and action of this spiritual power in persons whose lives are recorded in Holy Scripture—and most of us stop there, with the question begging assertion that such action is "miraculous." But why stop there? The phenomena do not stop there, but are continuous in Christian history. They are phenomena that are constantly attendant upon the life of sanctity. I do not mean that every alleged miracle in the "lives of the Saints" is to be accepted

without question; but I do mean that there is quite sufficient evidence in the lives of the saints of the operation of a power which we have, speaking broadly, declined carefully to consider and to appreciate which does not differ, so far as one can see, from the power exercised by St. Peter, St. Paul or St. John, which we admit. To me, there seems every reason to believe that the spiritual nature of man, purified and intensified by its union with the life of God in Christ, is constantly capable of dealing with the world in the way of a *force*, and producing effects which are as real as those produced by material forces. When we meet with such phenomena in the lives of the saints there is need, no doubt, to criticise and control them: but it cannot be admitted that they are *a priori* impossible, after the manner of the old scepticism, or that they are to be explained of a morbid mind, as it is at present fashionable to do. We admit unhesitatingly the influence of personality: we must widen our conception to include spiritual personality—personality which has become, through the life of union, the organ of the Divine Spirit, not through superseding or obliteration of our powers, but by the heightening and intensifying of them. Through such use of the human by the divine a new order of causation enters the world and the supernatural is naturalized.

We may state one result of our incorporation

in the Vine and of your purging that we may bring forth fruit, as an increase of privileges. Those who have entered upon the exercise of the Christian life as a life of union with their Saviour, find the fulfillment of his promises a constant fact of their experience—find this, because they have learned to accept and act upon his promises as they would upon the promises of any friend in whom they trusted. Our Lord's promises are intended to be the support and guidance of the daily life of the Christian; but they are so splendid and far-reaching that we are afraid of them and do not trust ourselves to them. I am sure that it cannot be said that the Christian community bases its life squarely upon them: Rather, it attempts to fall back upon them spasmodically and in cases of difficulty. But they are not meant to be places of refuge amid the crowded streets of life, but are the very street itself. "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." is a very sweeping promise, and is to be taken only with such limitations as are involved in the application of any principle to life. The things that will be impossible to us will be those that are rendered so by the imperfection of our union with Christ. Union, I must again insist, is the foundation of our Lord's action in us, and is the indispensable preliminary to his action. How far we have become one with him is the measure of



how far he can act in us. I do not mean that a man living in a state of sin and alienation from the life of God may not call upon God, and, repudiating his sin, hope for an answer to his cry; but that a man living in unrepudiated sin has no basis of hope. He must first of all repent and come to God. I do not mean that those whose union with our Lord is but partial and imperfect owing to the branch not yet having been thoroughly purged, are not heard of God; but that in their case the purging is the pressing matter, and that they must care for that before there is a possibility of gaining much of the "other things"—"seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." There is, no doubt, a certain necessary order in the distribution of the divine gifts.

One feels sure that prayers so often fail because they are the occasional resort to God for gifts on the part of those who have never cared enough about God to maintain any intimacy of life with him: who resort to him *in emergencies, as they* might to a stranger or neglected friend. Even such prayers should no doubt be made; and we may expect much from the All-Father who "giveth to all men liberally," and "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust," but they lack the

assured basis of Christian promise. The prayers that are made by Christians on the basis of our Lord's promises are of another order. They, too, may often seem unanswered; but the reason of this seeming lack of answer must be sought elsewhere. I think that we may be sure of this, if we are living lives close to our Lord, that the prayers that are not answered are the prayers which we *should not want* answered, if we could see the whole fact. The failures are failures that we shall rejoice in when we come to see the whole fact of life. There is no one with any deep experience of prayer who cannot look back and see that not once or twice, the love of God was manifest in the denial rather than in the granting our requests. God acted upon what was best for our lives at the time, not upon our imperfect vision of the best. There is a passage in the Sermon on the Mount that seems to everybody the principle of God's dealing with us in this matter. Our Lord is there teaching about prayer and lays down as the basis of our confidence this promise: "Everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened". He develops, as the ground of this promise, the Fatherhood of God; and then goes on to illustrate from the phenomena of human fatherhood. "What

man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" And surely if the son ask a stone or serpent, thinking it, in his ignorance, bread or fish, the human father will decline the mistaken request. He would not give evil gifts or hurtful because of the son's ignorance. And no more shall our Father which is heaven. He will regard the nature of our asking and the need of our life. He will be content in his giving to bear the reproaches of our ignorance, our fretful complaint that he is not faithful, the irritation of our disappointment. God is content to be misunderstood, and always will be misunderstood except by those who have the vision of faith, by those who have lived with God and trusted him and have found him faithful—as faithful in what he refused as in what he gave. They have learned to make it their first and abiding prayer that they may desire nothing but that which is according to his will, and that his will and his wisdom may ever check and override their own ignorance and limited vision. Approaching God with this mind they approach him in the strength of his promise: "what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye re-

ceive them, and ye shall receive them." "Ye shall receive them," for it is impossible for him who lives in union with God, to desire anything other than the will of God. The ultimate prayer of all Christians, conditioning any other prayer, is this: "Thy will be done."

## I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I Am the Light of the World.

*Let us picture —*

**B**LIND Bartimaeus, sitting by the way-side, begging. Our Lord, passing out of Jericho, with his disciples, is accompanied by a curious crowd, inspired by the hope, no doubt, of seeing some new miracles done by him. But though this hope was in their mind they overlooked the opportunity that the blind beggar was to our Lord. He would seem to have been a familiar figure, and suggested nothing to them. Yet here was a man in whose soul a great need had given birth to a great faith. Many had told him of Jesus of Nazareth and his wonderful works; and it was in his soul that if he could only get to

speaking with him, he, too, might experience his power. Hence the tumult of the passing crowd, and the information flung to him, that Jesus was going by, led him to cry out with a cry that would not be stilled by the protests of the multitude, but gained in intensity as he realized that his one hope of healing lay in attracting the attention of the passing Teacher and Prophet—"Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Imagine the terror of his soul least the sound of voices growing faint and of footsteps dying in the distance should tell him that his cry had been in vain, and then—how natural is that touch—the voices change; they are no longer protests against his crying, but words of encouragement: "Be of good comfort, rise: he calleth thee." And then the voice of Jesus, asking his need, and the words that bring healings:—"Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." So the light becomes the symbol of another Light, we may be sure, that was to fill his soul till life ended—and beyond.

*Consider, first —*

The poverty of humanity without Christ. We make a brave show of our skill, our learning, our enlightenment; but without Christ it is but the skill of ants and of apes, a curious thing but issueless, destined to perish with a perishing world. We



sit by the way-side of life, begging—begging for some knowledge of our destiny, begging for some ray of light to pierce the clouds that close about the sun's setting. And our sciences and our philosophies have nothing to say to our pleading, if not that it is the foolish pleading of a child. They charge us that we should hold our peace. But humanity cannot and will not do that. It continues to cry in the hope that its voice may reach some ear more sympathetic, will kindle the pity of some Unknown who will be touched by its extreme need, and pause and call it to come to him. To me there is nothing so pathetic as the ceaseless struggles of humanity to solve the riddle of its life, and its refusal to be satisfied with the answers that its teachers bring it from generation to generation. The history of human thought shows that there is an instinct in man that is stronger than all his reasoning, that declines the conclusions that seem to be forced upon it by that reasoning, and insists on turning hopefully to the ever-new passers on life's pathway, and crying out its needs to them and begging them to stop and listen. Have mercy on me, it has cried continually; and listened to all voices that promised any help. Those who claimed a monopoly of the learning of the world might speak derisively of its superstitions, but humanity has always preferred its super-

stitutions of a God and a future life, to the rational certainties and proofs of its teachers. It has been certain that at some time a voice would break through its darkness, and say, "Go thy way: thy faith has made thee whole."

*Consider, second —*

That a day came when the voice sounded—the voice so long awaited—and the darkness broke and man could know; could know that he was only passingly a creature of this world, and that he is the immortal creature of God. Jesus came, and walked along human streets, and went out of the gates of cities where blind beggars sit and cry, and listened to their voices and spoke words of hope. "I am the light of the world," he said to those who sat in darkness; and their eyes were opened and they saw him. He, the Word of God, swept the gathering clouds from the sunset sky, and men saw their sun go down in serenity and peace, because they now knew that it would rise again. We no longer look out on the world as a world torn by useless struggles and wet with purposeless blood, but we see the world illumined with a teaching that is from God, and we see it through the crimson of a blood that was shed to take away its sin. The ears of the deaf are unstopped, and they hear words of comfort and encouragement and

guidance; the eyes of the blind are opened, and they see Jesus of Nazareth who stands and calls them. We are no longer children of the darkness, but of the light. God has commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and it hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But let us not forget the darkness; let us not be as those who never having been blind, hear with but faint interest the affliction of the sightless. Let us rather remember, that we have passed from darkness into light, and that the passage back is a possible one. It is yet possible that the Light of the World may die out of our world, and the light within us become darkness. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

*Let us, then, pray —*

That we may walk in the light as the children of light. Let us pray that we may be lightened more and more unto the perfect day.

O God, the Enlightener of all nations, grant thy people to enjoy perpetual peace; and pour into our hearts that Radiant Light which thou didst shed into the minds of the Wise Men; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We beseech thee, O Lord, to enlighten thy peo-

ple, and alway set their hearts on fire with the brightness of thy glory; that they may both unceasingly acknowledge their Saviour, and truly apprehend their Lord who with thee and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end.

Life apart from God is unintelligible; it is the coming of the Spirit into life that unlocks its secrets. Christ is the known quantity which entering among the unknown quantities of life determines their values. He has enriched life everywhere that he has touched it; and far beyond the values which religion has obviously created there are other values which owe their existence to its unnoted influences. Yet the influence of our Lord has penetrated life and so entangled itself with the influences which come from other sources, that it is always possible to deny his influence if we will to. The social evidence for the influence of Christianity is strangely like the intellectual evidence for the beliefs of Christianity—there is always a loophole of escape if you do not want to believe. The evidence for faith never reaches the force of a demonstration, otherwise faith would cease. The appeal of the evidence will call forth response in "men of good will," not in others. We see this when we read those books which are from time to time written to show the gain to human society

through the Gospel. Page after page piles up illustrations of the thesis from philosophy, education, legislation, etc. It seems a luminous demonstration; and then we take up some volume written from the opposite point of view and watch the process whereby the force of the evidence is chipped away. We read of vast monuments whereon ancient kings have recorded their exploits in inscriptions which they believed would be imperishable; but ere many generations had passed some king of their successors had effaced their name and boldly written in his own. It is thus that the influence of Christianity has been dealt with: the records which bore our Lord's name have been defaced, and the name of some other written in. Now and again there arises some man bold enough to attempt to erase the name of Christ from history and to deny that he lived or founded the religion that is called after him. It is not very new or very important: it is an old story that we believe what we want to believe and see what we want to see. No doubt the landscape has a different appearance according as you stand on your feet or on your head. The universe is so big that you can assemble facts which will lend some color of support to almost any theory. You can "prove" that the earth goes round the sun or the sun goes round

the earth by selecting some facts and excluding others.

We look out upon the world from the point of view of those who have accepted Christianity, and our impression of the human landscape is therefore different from that gathered by those who start with the rejection of Christ and supernatural religion. Faith ascribes one set of values to the unknown quantity in the equation of life and unfaith another. We need to remember this when we are inclined to accept rationalistic interpretations of life up to a certain point, hoping thus to effect a reconciliation between faith and unbelief by imposing our conclusions upon the other man's premises. The divergence between rationalism and Christianity is in the premises. We cannot adopt a mechanical theory of the universe and then in the end insert somewhere in the niches of it a belief in prayer and free will. We cannot start from the premises of pantheism and hope to be able to hold a belief in responsible personality when we get through. It is no doubt true that there can be no real conflict between science and philosophy and religion; but it is only true of an ideal science and philosophy and religion. As these actually exist they are all intermixed with error and constantly run athwart one another's course. Ideally, there could be no divergence in the testimony of three



men who had been witnesses of the same event, but we know that no three men witnessing the same event will give precisely the same testimony. Science and philosophy and religion proceed from distinct groups of data and are deduced from the data by fallible men. Until we can eliminate the factor of fallibility we must expect that there will be more or less divergence in the conclusion. And while it is desirable that we constantly submit our conclusions to the criticism of others, it is not necessary to be very much disturbed when we find that the criticism is not always favorable. Faith, after all, is an ultimate for each of us, and is based on our own experience of life in the broad sense that all the facts are embraced in and proven by living. The Christian's certainty rests on this, that his experience embraces more facts than the experience of any other ; and among these facts that alter the character of the universe from what it is from the standpoint of any other experience. The Christian's contention is that the supernatural, that is, God in action, is not an hypothesis, like the other of the scientists and the absolute of the philosopher, but an experienced fact. Such being his premise his view of the universe will necessarily differ from that of those who deny God or accept him as a doubtful hypothesis. That science and

philosophy do not lend much support to religion is no surprise or shock to the Christian because he knows that they omit what to him is the most vital element in the problems they deal with.

And yet we have no quarrel with either while it keeps to its own ground. With science in particular there should be no "warfare." The first supposition of the scientist is that the world is intelligible. To speak accurately, this is not a scientific datum but an hypothesis of faith. The investigator of natural phenomena must make an act of faith as the preliminary condition to setting to work at all. If he had no faith in the intelligibility of the world, he could have no hope of reaching intelligible conclusions in investigating it. So far science and religion are agreed that they both rest on an act of faith. The scientist works in faith, seeking to observe and map out the modes of operation of the natural world. When he succeeds in finding uniform modes of action he summarizes them as "laws," that is, observed sequences. There are, so great is the number of the facts he has to deal with, and so complex, lacunae in his mass of observations, that he cannot fill, stretches of unknown territory that he cannot traverse. But these do not disturb him: because of his primary act of faith in the intelligibility of the universe as a whole, he is able to make subsidiary acts of faith;

that the lacunae are not breaks in the order of nature, but gaps in his knowledge. These will, perhaps, one day be filled up by observed facts; in the meantime they can be bridged by an hypothesis. They are like breaks in an inscription where some letter has been worn away or effaced. It is not mere guess work to assume that there have been letters there; and from the letters that go before and follow, the vacant space can be filled with more or less probability. The condition is that the restored letters shall make sense. So the lacunae in the natural order may be rationally filled in by suppositions that will join the two sides of the break and "make sense." This, however, we must insist rests on an act of faith in the intelligibility of the system as a whole.

The attitude of the Christian toward the world is essentially the same. His first supposition is that the world is not only physically intelligible but that it is morally and spiritually intelligible. His faith embraces the faith of the scientist and goes beyond it. The scientist cannot get beyond matter and force. Where these end he can only look off the edge of the universe and say, "I see nothing beyond. There is no physical hypothesis that will lighten the darkness and take me further." But the Christian has a further hypothesis—the hypothesis of faith. He believes in God, that the universe is the

work of a Spiritual Intelligence. He meets, as does the scientist, in the physical order, lacunae that he cannot fill, dark places that he cannot light; but he is no more disturbed by them than the scientist by the lacunae which lie in the natural order. He believes that the will and operation of God are continuous across the lacunae, though for the present he cannot see how. But because of his primary hypothesis, that the universe is a system intelligible, spiritually and morally, he goes on undisturbed. Seeming contradictions do not terrify him, problems of pain and sin, apparent limitations of God's power of goodness, do not disturb him. All these to him are but evidences of the vastness of the universe, and of his own limitations.

And the faith of the Christian is fortified by the coming of Christ into life. It was my lot once to live where my windows looked out to the West: they opened upon a little lake, a lake that was a living thing, changing its expression with each hour of the day—an opal set in a frame of green. Across the lake a wooded bank rose from the water. In the early morning as the light that heralds the sunrise came, the beauty of the lake and of the bank was new each moment. One could not see the sky where the sun was coming in the glory of the dawn-tints, or the flocks of clouds that ushered in the day. But the light, as it touched the Western bank,

changed what had a moment before been a uniform stretch of dull, nameless color, into the endless variety of a living wood. Each tree and bush started out in all its individuality; there was the yellow of young willows, the silver-green of the poplar, the emerald of the maple, the mauve and pink of young oak buds. Where one had distinguished only shadows moving in the darkness there was all the variety of throbbing light—the light had come and revealed and glorified it.

So is the coming of our Lord into human life: he comes as light: he brings out its meaning and its value, meaning and value that has been there all the time, only we were unable to see them. His presence flashes light into the dark places, and the perplexity and trouble of them pass away. He justifies the ways of God to man, and makes us ashamed of our doubt and terror. He braces our faith and confirms our hypothesis that this world is God's world and is being led by him with the inerrancy of infinite wisdom. For unnumbered generations men had walked in darkness. They had appealed in vain to their accredited teachers, their philosophers and scientists, for light and help. But they had been fed with a mass of unintelligible and contradictory speculations. To maintain any hope at all they had been compelled to disregard their teachers and turn from them to the indestructible

instinct that they found in their own souls—the instinct that told them that whatever might be the depressing appearances of the world, or the contradictory voices of men, this is God's world and ruled by the wisdom of God. This unfailing *instinct of God* sustained men; and this was justified in the coming of Christ. He is the Light that dissipates the world's darkness; and if there are dark places still, if all the questions we can ask have not yet found answers, if they are lacunae in our knowledge, still there is abundant basis for our faith and confident hope that the Providence of God which is so far intelligible will that day be justified when the full facts are revealed. God in Christ, as an explanation of the universe, "makes sense".

Because we are very sure of that, we are optimists—it is not the least of the boons of Christianity that it enables men to be optimistic. We are just emerging (at least the signs point that way) from a long period of pessimism. The wail of the minor poet has long been heard in the land. The men who have made the literature of the world in the last half century have preached to us of the triviality and inconsequence of life. Much of the humor of the world has turned sour. When protest has been raised, the answer has been that it is the duty of literature to mirror life—an indisput-



able proposition. "We are going to tell the whole truth about life and nothing shall stop us", is the substance of one of the latest literary protests in the interest of freedom. The meaning is, it would seem, we will speak as plainly as we like on questions of sex. I do not know that there is any objection to so doing. In fact, I doubt if anyone has been much impressed with the prevalence of a *disciplina arcana* in such matters in the writers of the last half century. Such speaking may be some of the truth about life, but it is certainly not all of it. There are some of us who pass a reasonable amount of our time thinking about other things, and do not find ourselves deprived of subjects of conversation where the problem of the sexes is excluded. We can, at times, permit ourselves to doubt whether the quality of literature is, in fact, improving under the new discipline. Nor is it true that "life" means slum life, or criminal life, or any other fraction of human living. Life is a big thing of mingled lights and shadows, and it is not adequately treated when represented as all shadow. The daily paper, we are told, is a mirror of contemporary life; but any one who will think for five minutes on the matter will see that it is not. A newspaper man explained to me the other day that the news value of an occurrence was in proportion to the *shock* it would produce. That accounts for the fact that the death

of some really great man will call forth a dozen lines of obituary, while a column will be devoted to the luxurious dog-house that has been erected by some foolish woman for her pets. News represents an appeal to the curiosity or passing interest of readers; it does not, and in the nature of the case, cannot, appeal solely to the interests that are deep and permanent. One does not object to the newspaper, but only to the pretension that it is a chronicle of life. Base-ball has not that importance in human life that an observer from another planet might infer that it had if he relied on the newspaper for his evidence or limited his observation to the streets of New York during some "final series". By far the greater part of human interests, and the deeper and more valuable part, do not make good copy, or afford the appropriate themes for commercialized fiction and drama.

My point is that pessimistic views of life are the results of a narrow observation and are rendered easy by those who portray life in terms of "shock", and find the greater part of life dull colorless and uninteresting. If it be true that humanity is not made up of Ivanhoses and Colonel Newcomes; it is also true that it is not made up of Ann Veronicas and Senhouses. The interests of life are not necessarily dramatic or spectacular. There are pleasures and deep joys, heart-searching experi-

ences, situations that call out all that is best and noblest in man, which mean much in the moulding of character, but are valueless as documents of publicity. Yet if we are to get at a true estimate of the meaning of life these must enter our account. There are possibilities of life for all of us which we too often overlook and miss, which would raise our lives to higher levels and confer experiences that would make pessimism impossible for us. But we are fascinated by the box of life and pour out the jewels. How many are there who actually make the effort to find a meaning and purpose in life? Is it not true that the majority treat life as a meaningless succession of unrelated days and years, as days and years bound together by a merely temporary purpose? Events, in such a life, because they are accepted as isolated occurrences and no effort is made to see them related to the whole, may well seem meaningless. Even the most important event if so taken, is meaningless. How meaningless is the birth of a child who lives but a few weeks! But through the brief life of the child an intense experience has come to the parents, an experience which leaves an abiding mark. Can either of them be just what they were before? Has there not been some revelation through the child that abides in life? Are not death and the other world seen with an added shade of meaning? Does not heaven

mean more to them because of a treasure laid up there? Life may be darkened and clouded by death or it may be enriched and deepened. That is as we use the fact. It gives the opportunity for the display of what is in us—pessimism and optimism.

Our reactions from life are determined, no doubt, by processes within ourselves which have been long going on, it may be, unnoticed. You stand by the artist and watch him mix his colors on the palette, and the result of his deft manipulation is some glorious color that fascinates you as it is spread upon the canvas. Why, you ask, that tiny touch of yellow? All the painter can say is that he *knew* that it was needed. He has come to the knowledge by long experience. His color has gained an individuality as the outcome of his life-work. You and I react in a perfectly individual way from the same facts of life, because we each experience life differently. Of course we get no meanings if we are not looking for them; but whatever meaning we do get are meanings that we can get because of our past. We cannot gather the spiritual meanings with which even common events are big, unless we have accustomed ourselves to look upon life as fundamentally spiritual, and taught ourselves to look for the spiritual possibilities of events.

It is the revelation that comes to us from our Blessed Lord, that life is a sacred thing, the gift of

God, that unveils its significance. That revelation has a double effect. It shows us the possibility of awful disaster that is near every life—the possibility of destroying a thing of infinite value. Life gets its value from God, it is a creature of God, a mode of his self-manifestation. One never looks on at the process of the destruction of spiritual values that goes on all the time under our very eyes without heart-ache. The streets of a city appear as battlefields strewn with corpses. Here are all the instruments of an infernal warfare. Here is human ingenuity tasked to the uttermost in the hellish work of destroying souls. Walk about Times Square at night, and if you have a mind that can see, you will walk with heavy heart and eyes filled with tears. This, you will feel, is where Satan's seat is; where the net of excitement is cast for willing victims. Night after night this vulgar blaze of light looks down on souls swept to spiritual death by the fascination of crude sensation. If the lights could but illuminate the inner man! That boy there has stolen that he may see the picture show. That girl has cast aside the advice of friends and disobeyed her parents that she may "enjoy" herself tonight. That scarcely more than boy who is going into the saloon, already has eyes red with wine. Covetousness, anger, adultery—all the mortal sins walk at large here under the eyes of the



police, the representatives of a society which is unable to govern itself. Can you see the souls sickening and dying—dying brutally, riotously, gaudily? And what is your personal relation to the sight? Is it pessimism, that accepts it as the necessary outcome of an advanced civilization? Is it cynicism that goes its way with contemptuous amusement at the vileness and stupidity of the human animal? Is it indifference which accepts it without thought as what has been and will be? Or does it seem to you a pitiable and useless waste which an effective action upon what this community as a whole believes would soon bring to an end? For, after all, this community does *not* believe that the seven deadly sins are the proper expression of human activity. It does *not* believe in the right of passion to gratification, or in the right of covetousness to exploit the weak and ignorant. It does *not* believe in the right of unscrupulous men to make boys drunkards and girls harlots, to fill hospitals and almshouses with the degraded wrecks of men and women. No! the revelation of God in Christ has made it impossible that any community should believe that. The Light that lightens the world has made that clear. But the Light is not being transmitted into heat—the heat of zeal that will drive men to live by their beliefs. Men do not live by their beliefs, but remain observers, critics, drifters,



waiters upon others' actions, hoping that someone will act, but inactive themselves.

But the revelation not only shows us the disaster consequent upon this disregard of spiritual values: it shows us the power that is inherent in the spiritual life. It is but a few steps from the spiritual agony of Times Square to where St. Mary's stands with the figure of the Crucified lifted above its door. It is but a step from a life that believes and looks on in inaction, to a life that believes with a belief that is dynamic. It is but a step! But that step involves an experience of the Cross. "I am the light of the world!" But the Light that Jesus is, reveals, first of all, that he is crucified. The light that streams into the world streams from a Cross; and as it passes into our lives and energizes them it becomes in them the power of sacrifice—the power of those who have been crucified with Christ and are risen in him. When we are so united to our Lord that his experience is ours we shall learn the power of spiritual motive and the energy of spiritual principle. The spiritual life is not a theory that can be learned, but an energetic action which is known in experiencing it. And when we have experienced it we can no longer look on in hopelessness at the ills of the world; hoping, at most, that God will heal them: but we shall know that he has redeemed us and made us one with himself, to the

end that through us his work may go on. The word now is: "ye are the light of the world", and "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is through us that the world-darkness must be dissipated.

The first step in this world-illuminating process is to focus the light upon our own lives. They must be thoroughly illuminated before we can transmit light. Many an attempt to transmit light comes to a premature end because the light within is darkness. First of all we need to bring to bear the revelation that is in Christ upon the facts of our own lives. Your life needs that illumination; it needs to see its obligations of self-perfecting in thought and motive, its possibility of development in spiritual power, in intensity of spiritual purpose. We have a standard in the human action of Jesus, and we must constantly recur to that. It is our shiftless tendency to measure ourselves by some other standard. We need to educate ourselves spiritually.

And notwithstanding that there is nothing more important than our spiritual education, there is no phrase more meaningless than spiritual education as applied to the average American Christian. Education implies systematic effort to call out and train immature powers. It implies intelligence di-

rected to carefully considered ends; intelligence which shows itself, among other things, in choice of means appropriate to the end. Of how many men and women can it be said that their spiritual state today is the outcome of a well-considered and carefully followed-up system of spiritual education? Yet the powers of the spiritual nature have ends as important and are as capable of effective training for those ends as the natural powers. But whatever spiritual habits we have are very much the result of accident. We have picked up in the course of our wanderings on this planet certain scraps of spiritual information which most likely have never been related in our experience. We have acquired certain religious customs, such as saying our prayers and going to church; we have accumulated some forms of action which we should describe as our morals, but which, in fact, are imitations of other people's conduct, conformity to the fashion of life which prevails in the circle in which we move. The evidence of this is ready at hand. We do not have to take cases so extreme as that of the woman who stated that she came to the church from the Methodists because the Methodists forbade card-playing and she liked to play cards. And then added—perhaps because of some expression on the face of her visitor—"The Episcopal Church does believe in playing cards,

doesn't it?" A priest is being continually asked questions of a most elementary kind, questions that imply an abysmal ignorance of the commonplaces of the spiritual life—not by people who are unlettered, or have passed their life in unbelief, but by people who all their lives have been faithful members of the church. The crass ignorance of the average Christian concerning the Christian religion is inconceivable.

Why do not the clergy teach? Without discussing the capacity of the clergy to teach, which is not always what we could desire—the clergy cannot teach people who will not come to be taught. The clergy have no power to compel even the children, not to say the men and women, of their congregations, to come to classes. And people who are quite able to find time for the theatre, for clubs, for card parties, are unable to find time for religious instruction. It is impossible to keep children under religious instruction because their parents are utterly indifferent in the matter of their religious training. Adults are not to be gathered because—well, they have an infinite number of excuses which nobody believes, least of all themselves. The real fact is that they are not interested, and will not go where they are not amused. Religious instruction cannot claim to be amusing. The only thing one effects by instruction classes is to gather

that element of a parish which least needs instruction, and which comes out of a feeling of loyalty. The result is a community to which it is almost impossible to speak of the deeper things of the spiritual life, and which must be entertained with snippets of religious teaching carefully sugar-coated to avoid even these being found unpalatable.

There are, of course, other possible sources of spiritual training. There is reading, for example, But go into the average Christian household and look about for the religious literature they read. Will you find even a Bible in a state of active use? If it is a family containing religious members you will find one or two devotional books, possibly; not much used, and of small profit if they were. I suppose we have long ago given up the superstition that universal education is going to produce a community of earnest seekers after knowledge of any kind. People read newspapers and magazines and popular fiction—and there it stops: I tried to converse the other day with a wealthy woman who divides her time between Europe and America and who is extremely active and liberal in promoting a certain kind of good works, and I could not find that she ever read anything at all. Most people who are not wealthy seem to consider the buying of a book an absurd waste of money. If you recom-

mend a book and they can borrow it they will perhaps look into it.

These things being so, how can we hope for the spread of religion in any useful meaning of the word? Can people who do not give time to spiritual discipline ever become spiritual? In the present stage of the evolution of the spiritual man it looks as though we might continue to be content with a small minority of spiritually intelligent people, and do what we can to educate others.

What, then, do we mean by spiritual training? Canon Simpson puts the matter admirably: "The instruction of the Christian is not the conveyance to the intellect of a series of propositions concerning the being of God, but the education of his spirit in the art of detecting the presence of God in practical contact with the facts of life. It is the transmission of a key, and no man can be called a Christian indeed so long as he keeps it in his pocket. He must for himself fit it into the lock, and find that it opens the door. That is the significance of the key." And Christ is the key of life. Our personal religion begins by being an experience of God in Christ. It is a mistake to begin religious training anywhere else: to begin, for instance, with natural knowledge, and attempt to build up to spiritual knowledge through that. It is not true that the experience of God is very difficult, and only to be



looked for at the end of religious training. The child is quite capable of a true experience of God. He quite naturally believes in our Lord and finds him present in his life. What we are not to look for in the child is a religious theory. Consequently, I utterly dissent from most of the modern teaching about the religious training of children. It is founded on a bad psychology. It recommends that the child shall not be taught religion in its earliest years because it will inevitably form wrong ideas which will embarrass it at a later stage of its development. But at what stage of human development are we certain not to form wrong notions of God? At any stage of our development our notions of God are erroneous, that is, inadequate. They do not, and cannot, grasp the whole fact of God: the point is that they are adequate *to our needs* in the state of development in which we find ourselves. You gain nothing, therefore, by putting off the age of religious instruction till fourteen or more. The child at six can form a notion of God on which he can usefully act, and can form a habit of acting in response to spiritual motive, which in value outweighs the fact that he will have later to correct his thought of God. It is the *habit of acting* that is of the first importance. That the child's prayers are sometimes very extraordinary in their contents is of no importance at all. That he is

learning to rely on his heavenly Father in all the concerns of his life is all important. His thought of God will mature as the years go on; but if his mind is kept a blank until some indefinite period when his teacher thinks his thought of God will not be altogether unworthy, it is doubtful if you have done more than to deprive him of some years of experience with no counterbalancing gain.

The creation of experience is what spiritual training aims at, and that can hardly be injected ready made. It has to grow. It can be guided in its growth, it can be given material to feed upon. Religious instruction gives the material. The object of the creed is to guide religious experience. As religious experience is experience of God in Christ, it has in all cases a normal course of procedure, a typical form. The creed is this, because the creed is the formulation of normal Christian experience. The creed is not truth thought out *in vacuo*; but the truths of the creed came into the world through Christian experience, and then language was sought to clothe and make intelligible the experience. The struggle in the Church in creed development, was a struggle, not to discover something, but to express something. The only thing at any time new about the creed was the words that conveyed the experience. Therefore the process of spiritual training is the process of exper-

ienicing the creed—of passing for oneself through the normal Christian experience which is registered there. If we cannot find the creed true, it is because we have not succeeded in experiencing God in Christ as the Church from the beginning has. If we have had God as the creating and ruling power in our lives, if we have found our Lord to be our Saviour, if we are lifted up to dwell with him in heavenly places, if the Holy Spirit is bringing forth its fruits in our lives, if we are in constant touch with God in the Sacraments—then we are expressing just what the creed states to be the truth.

This expression, of course, cannot be built up without close attention to our spiritual activity. The spiritual powers must be constantly exercised. That practice of religion that consists in the performance of occasional acts is certainly not adequate to an experience which shall embrace and transfigure the whole life. We are seeking to become, not men and women of the world who conform to the law of God, but new creatures in Christ Jesus who reflect his mind. A legal righteousness may be a very fair imitation of the righteousness that "exceeds;" but is only an imitation. You hold in your hand a diamond, as you think, and you are satisfied with it; but take it to the jewelers and throw it into a tray of real diamonds and you

will see the difference. We read, not long ago, of a woman whose string of pearls had been the envy of the world in which she moved; but she died, and when her property was appraised, many of the pearls were confessed imitations. Can we carry that temper of mind into our religion? Surely there, at any rate, the grace of sincerity is of all worth. There we want the pearl of great price, a spiritual life flooded with the Light that is Christ. We want the light to penetrate to the very darkest and most dusty corners of our soul, and reveal their need of cleansing.

Christ is the true Light that, coming into the world, lighteneth every man. In his light we see light; and our only aspiration is to be obedient to the guiding of the light. That light is shed forth into our souls abundantly; and though the medium through which it passes may dim the ray, still the soul that seeks to follow as far as it can see, shall not miss of its finding.

“For meek obedience, too, is light,  
And following that, is finding him.”

## I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord—*

I am the Resurrection and the Life.

*Let us picture—*

THE meeting of Jesus and Martha. We can imagine with what growing despair Martha had watched by the death-bed of Lazarus. The conviction that this illness was unto death had gradually come to her. There was nothing that it was within her power to do—she could only watch and see her brother die. And what would add to her pain was the perfect conviction that she had that there was one who could save him, if only he were there. But where to find him; how to reach him? If only he would come! And while she waits and hope grows fainter and fainter, Lazarus dies. And then, after all is over, she hears that

Jesus has come. Although it is too late to save Lazarus, she is anxious to see esus. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Is there just a shade of reproach? A feeling that he who had shown such wonderful power and knowledge, might have known that Lazarus was ill, might have come earlier? Is there an underlying hope in those other words: "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee." You have raised others from the dead—that was her wistful, unspoken, feeling. Watch our Lord, intent on increasing this hope, on calling out her faith in him. "Thy brother shall rise again." Yes; she knows that; she is well taught in her religion; but that is not just what will comfort her now. We see her eyes fixed on our Lord in trembling hope of that something more; and then it comes—"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

*Consider, first—*

That nowhere do we see more clearly the love and sympathy of Jesus than in his dealing with mourners. We watch him halting the funeral cortege outside the gates of Nain, and taking pity on the widow and restoring her son. We follow him



through the crowd as he goes with Jairus to the chamber where his daughter lies, and see him take her by the hand and raise her up. We see him now, asking to be led to the tomb of Lazarus where he will speak the word of life that will bring him back from the dead. This human sympathy of our Lord, called out, as it is, by the circumstance of the day, is so ready and vivid a thing! And here in the case of this family of Bethany, there is that back-ground of human intercourse and affection, which tell of quiet hours spent by the weary Jesus in the peace of this home, where there was always ready for him the loving ministries that he must at times have longed for. When we are weary and heavy-laden, it is so good to have a place to rest. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." His customary gravity is disturbed by the emotion of the moment: Jesus wept. As the sisters stood by the weeping Jesus, did they feel that the faint hopes they had felt in the news of his coming were being washed away in those tears? Did they feel, as the onlooking Jews felt, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Would he weep, if there was still any hope for them? And then the words of life: "Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot in grave-clothes." The stupendous wonder of the miracle

would, for a moment have prevented even joy. And then the joy of reunion.

*Consider, second—*

That the love and sympathy of Jesus is not a story of the past. It is a present experience; you and I know it. His revelation of God, and of God's attitude toward us, is a permanent thing. We build our lives and direct our experiences by the assumption that what our Lord was to the widow of Nain, to Jairus, to the sisters of Bethany, that he still is to-day, and toward us. We count with certainty on the experience of the same love and sympathy; we know that the same human affection is about us, and that it is supported by the same divine power. Anyone who has led a sincerely Christian life can at any moment go back into his experience and find there the evidences of the divine love and care. They do not have to depend on the stories of the past; on the sight of Jesus standing at the grave of Lazarus, or at the gate of Nain, he has met them as they went out of the city gate despairing; he has stood by them as they wept at the tomb of those they loved. They can say out of their own experience, "The Lord is my Light and my Strength." Without this experience of Jesus, could our religion last? I cannot imagine that one can go on year after year, professing belief in a re-

ligion that never justifies its promises in experience. I can not imagine any one going on for long, professing belief in a love of God that they have never felt warm about them. Jesus' presence in the house at Bethany is not some exceptional thing that we read with wonder, and regret that it cannot happen again. Jesus is in our house; he sits with us at our tables, we minister to him; he rejoices in our happiness and comforts us in our sorrow; he stands beside us when we watch our dead and says for our comfort, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

*Let us, then, pray—*

That we may realize this constant presence of Jesus in all the joys and sorrows of our lives. Let us go forth to meet Jesus when we are mourning; let us hold his hand as we stand by our dead. Let us have confidence that he will be the power that will raise us from the dead.

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him; and that, through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

. . . . .

I suppose that there are no words which have brought such a flood of help and comfort to human souls as these words of our Lord. We, who have lived our lives in the light of Christian revelation, are unable to appreciate what death meant before that revelation came. There came death to every man, and after that a great interrogation point. Was man still living or had he utterly perished out of the universe? If he lived, was he still man, or had he passed into some other form of life? If he lived, was his state better or worse? These questions found an answer in our Lord's words, backed as they were by such an exhibition of his power as the raising of Lazarus.

It is true that there were theories enough about the future state of man current in the time of our Lord: the Jews, indeed, believed in a future resurrection. But it is one thing to have a theory of a Resurrection, to be told, as Mary and Martha had been told, that there would be a Resurrection on the last day; it was another thing to have that Resurrection connected with a person who is himself the guarantee of its truth, because he himself has passed through the experience of death. There are, no doubt, still doubters, people who to-day are yet saying, that we are quite ignorant of the future, that no one has returned from the other side of death. But that is not true. Lazarus returned.

The widow's son of Nain returned, the daughter of Jairus returned. "But they left no memoirs and went back again without speaking any words that have reached us. We should be glad to listen to a report of their experience." That, no doubt, is true; but there is one who did not go back without speaking, one who assures us that he has passed through the experience of death, and that, when the time comes that we must meet it, he will go with us. He assures us that when we go out of this life we shall not go out into the dark, friendless and lonely, but that we shall go with him. That world which men still speak of as dark and unknown, is neither dark nor unknown to those who have the vision of faith. To those our Lord has revealed it, lighted by his word and by his presence. Unknown in the sense that we cannot picture it to the imagination it still is; but it is not unknown in its essential conditions. We know all that we need to know. We know that it is the world of our Father that we go to, filled with the light and glory of his presence, and filled too with the love and sympathy of our Saviour who has gone before us to make ready the way, who is, indeed, himself the Way in that as in all worlds. He who stood at the grave of Lazarus and said, "Come forth," will stand at the gate of Paradise and say, "come in." "Come ye blessed of

my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

To-day, then, if the world is still filled with men and women who are ignorant of what lies on the other side of death, they are ignorant as any one may be of any subject which they decline to study. And because the instinct of immortality has been deep in men at all times, we may say that the ignorance of it is not a natural but an acquired ignorance—the ignorance of those who have reasoned themselves out of the natural belief which should have led them to the reception of the guarantees with which Christianity certifies it. If to-day men meet death as a thing dreaded and unknown it is because they ignore the information that is at their hand. They are as men starting on a far journey who should ignore all the reports of the travelers who have preceded them, and insist on treating the country through which they are to travel as unknown and unexplored. Professor Tyndale, with all the hope of the Gospel before him, with that certainty of the supremacy of Christ over death which had sustained the dying for so many generations of Christians and removed from them all fear of the grave and what lies beyond it present to his mind, could not dare to say, "Like streaks of morning cloud we fade into the infinite azure of the past." Professor Huxley, writing to his sister on



the death of their mother, says, (and oh! the pity of it) "I offer you no consolation, my dear sister, for I know of none." Surely of all men most miserable! It is worth while being a Christian if only to have something better to say than that in the face of death. We, standing by the bed of death, hear a shout of triumph over it, "Death is swallowed up in victory." We turn away from the place where the tired body is laid at rest comforted by the words of one who had seen the Risen and Ascended Jesus; "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

We may be bold to say that our Lord could not be satisfied by transient intercourse with us, but that he will have us to be with him forever. There is no thought in all our religion that is more overwhelming than that; and yet that is what is involved in his taking to himself our nature, in his wanting to be with us at all. I fancy that we sometimes think of the love of our Lord as a kind of abstract and general love, a love of the race, that seeks the good of humanity as a whole, that applies to individuals as they are included in the race, but lacks the personal note which our human love has. We think it

a part of our limitation and feebleness that we cannot express any fervid love of men, but only for the individuals whom we know, or at least know of. God's love is greater, in that it can embrace the whole at once. That is true; God's love does embrace the whole; but it would be feeble like ours, only in an inverse sense, if the love of the individual man was weakened by his being loved only as a unit in the whole mass of humanity. Perhaps it would clear our thought if we were to substitute for the rather threadbare notion of love that we have, the thought of the *friendliness* of God. That seems to me to accent the personal relation: "I have called you friends;" and when we hear our Lord saying that, we seem to get the note of intimacy. St. John shows his unfailing insight as to the meaning of spiritual reality when he says of our Lord that he loved "his own," a word revealing the closeness of his union with us. Our Lord loved, not the Apostles, but Peter and James and John. And he loves each of us in the same close, personal way. May we not dare to say that while the love of God is infinite and perfect for all his children, yet for each child there is an uniqueness in the love which is determined by the quality of the child himself? That would seem to be implied in any relation that we can rightly call personal.

Much the same truth is implied in the fact of our

creation, if we will think it out. If God created us it is because he wanted us. We cannot think of God as setting in motion forces over which he afterwards loses control, or as contemplating the results of those forces simply in the large, without thought of the individual. Men talk of the evolution of the universe as a fast process working to ends that are unspeakably great, but remorseless of the fate of the individual. God is to them the commander-in-chief of a great army who directs it to a successful campaign, but is thoughtless of the fate of the individual. Cruelty to the individual is a necessary accident in the working out of the whole plan. But in the light of our Lord's teaching we may not so think of God. His thought is as close to the man who falls out of the ranks to die by the wayside, as to the advance of the whole army. And if we have to conceive of him as sacrificing the individual to the mass, it is through no failure of love and tenderness to the individual; it is still the personal love and care of God which guides his treatment of us. There is no hiding or forgetfulness of that when he appoints us to bear the burden and heat of the day. There is an often missed note in our Lord's teaching of the particular providence of God: "Not a sparrow *falls* to the ground without your Father." It is the seeming waste and loss that our Lord stresses as evidence of the priceless

care of God. And the response of the divine giving is wonderfully set out in St. Paul's saying: "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

Our Lord's mission was not solely or chiefly a mission of teaching. He came to rescue us and bring us into unity with himself and with the Father. He came that he might abide with us forever. There is nothing transient in his relation to us; it is a relation for eternity. Our Lord enters humanity as a permanent power, as the ever-springing source of its inner life. His power in us becomes that "Power of an endless life" of which the author of the epistle of the Hebrews speaks. That is an illuminating phrase. When our life acquires stability our whole attitude is changed. It is the feeling of human weakness and instability and of the fruitlessness of even our best efforts. The best and greatest that man can do has no more significance than his least and weakest, if in the end nothing but the grave awaits him, if "that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts, even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above the beast." Again and again has the conviction that this is man's fate paralyzed his best efforts, and driven him to seek

from life the most that the senses can give of transient enjoyment, "to suck his orange dry" while he has it. Men of nobler mode have sought to lose themselves in the thought of the race and to see a factitious immortality in the continued existence of humanity. There is an element of greatness in this—to spend one's life unselfishly for the profit of those whom we shall never see and who, perchance, will never hear of us. But this too is vanity, for there is no immortality of the race. However distant, still the hour strikes when the race of man will vanish from an exhausted planet—the years of the earth are as nothing to the years of eternity. It is the revelation of an endless life which brings to us the sense of power, bringing, as it were, the conviction that we work for an eternity in which we shall share. That which is best in us is permanent, the silver and gold and precious stones abide; only the wood and hay and stubble perish. Whatever of *worth* we succeed in accomplishing is a permanent contribution to the wealth of the universe. In the power of an endless life, stimulated and energized, we throw ourselves into the work of the kingdom as those whose citizenship contains the promise of an eternal inheritance destined not to fade away even with the passing of all things temporal. We are participants of the unshaken things which remain after the removing

of those things that are shaken. We are inhabitants of the eternal years.

This power which entering into men gives them eternity, this power of an endless life, is the power of him who is the Life, and is the power by which men rise from the dead. Our Resurrection is a certainty because we are in him: we cannot be separated from him by anything but our own will. Separation is always against his will and his work, against the effort he is making to master us now. God is not a God of the dead, he does not form some new relation with men after they are dead. The power that shall bring about our Resurrection is not some new power that shall be exerted upon us at the Resurrection at the last day: *it is working in us now.*

It is the power that results from our union with him, and consequently we see that the maintenance of this life of union is the end toward which our spiritual activities are to be directed. Our lives must be conducted with a sense of their possibilities: we work with our eyes on the future in which the full significance of the child of God shall first appear. Having that in mind we are content with the slowness of our attainment here. We are content to do pioneer work; to sow for a distant harvest, knowing that in the end "we shall reap, if we faint not." The present has no importance except



as a part of a whole. We are told of the importance of this life, of this world. Yes, it is important, if it is continuous with another world. If it is an experience entirely unrelated, if we conceive human experience here as uninfluential on the future life, it would seem that this world cannot have much importance. And that is the way in which a large part of the human race seems to regard life. Any kind of a life here is to be followed automatically by an improved life hereafter. Such a disagreeable thing as hell cannot be conceived to exist anywhere in the universe of God. That can only mean that there is no continuity between this world and the next, and that character does not count; that saint and sinner alike, having passed through the experience of death, shall be welcomed to the Mansions of the Blessed. But it is inconceivable that we should slip out of one character and into another because we have crossed the threshold that divides two states of being. If this is possible, then both life and God are unintelligible, being guided by no continuity of purpose. We can only base hope on a purpose in the universe that shows itself to be stable. We have no courage or stimulus to work if death results, not in the unveiling of a world in which the spiritual actions begun in this world continue and progress, but into a topsy-turveydom in which values are completely altered and anything

may happen. We are told that final separation from God is inconceivable; that God will not tolerate such a blot on the universe as is implied in the existence of souls that are unreconciled to him. But the essence of hell is the separation of the soul from God; and that would seem to be as conceivable at one period of God's rule of the universe as at another. The soul dead in trespasses and sin exists now, and in that state of death passes to the next stage of existence; that it should be acknowledged as existing in this state, and be inconceivable in the next state, can only be because we are imposing our artificial divisions, arising out of time-conditions, upon the universe as related to God. Neither is it necessary to conceive of the state of "the lost" as implying continued rebellion against God. What that state really implies is lost capacity for the Beatific Vision as the result of opposition to God. The opposition may cease, doubtless does cease, without the capacity being *recreated*—for that is what would have to take place. It is not necessary to think of hell as punishment in any other sense than this: that the rejection of spiritual life here is a permanent fact, a loss which cannot be made good hereafter. That is a sufficiently awful thought: but it is less awful than the thought that the universe is governed by a purpose on the stability of which we cannot count.

Mary and Martha had faith in the Resurrection of the dead. "I know that he shall rise again in the Resurrection at the last day." But that was not the faith that our Lord wanted to create in them. He was calling man to a faith that was richer than any that was possible under the older dispensation. Our Lord had come to make that richer faith possible. He wanted the sisters to believe, not that Lazarus would rise again, *but that he was not really dead*. "I am the Resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Men had for centuries believed in the survival by the soul of death; they had even believed in some places in a final Resurrection; but what our Lord taught was that those who were in him, those whom he had united to himself, did not die in the sense that death wrought any separation between himself and them. Their relation to him is untouched by death; so far as it is affected at all, it is in the direction of a more perfect revelation and a closer union.

Have we that attitude toward death? Do we think of it as weaving tighter the bond between our Lord and us? Do we think of the world beyond death as being for the Christian a nearer, better understood communion with our Saviour? Do we think of it as the entrance upon a new phase of

that Eternal Life which, our will and work co-operating, our Lord has been imparting to us here? As we conceive the "other world" as continuous with this, and the "other life" as but the fruitage of this, we begin to understand the importance of this life. We understand the creative power of our present living. We are big with our own future, we are creating our future selves. We are laying up the treasure which survives all temporal change. M. Rolland has put it finely: "In the measure that one lives, in the measure that one creates, in the measure that one loves and loses those whom one loves, one escapes death. In the creation of a new work we escape from ourselves and are saved in the work we have created, in the souls whom we have loved and who have left us." However defective M. Rolland's belief in immortality, his words are true for the Christian. Not only we ourselves, but all our work is in Christ. There it is stored up for us and we have lost nothing. No thought, no work, which is the expression of our life in him can ever be lost, but is a permanent enrichment of our nature.

Could we endure to think of another world if this were not so? Could we endure to think of death as the closing of one story, a story we have written in tears and joy, a story into the making of which all the passion and energy of our life went, and the

beginning of another which is continuous with it only in the sense that it has the same hero? I would as soon believe in some theory of transmigration by which I am to resume life, indeed, but under an altered form and in entire forgetfulness of what has gone before. The glory of the Christian belief in the Resurrection Life is that it is the same life in Christ, carrying with it all its content that has been laid up in Christ. Its human relations established in this world, if they have been spiritualized and rendered stable by their relation to our Lord, go with it into the other world. Nothing is lost that is loved in our Lord; all the affections we have known here we resume there, if they were in him. Thus have the thoughts of the Christian been beautifully translated:

Sleep on, Beloved, sleep and take thy rest,  
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast,  
We love thee well, but Jesus loves thee best—  
Good night.

Calm is thy slumber as an infant's sleep,  
But thou shalt wake no more to toil or weep,  
Thine is a perfect rest, secure and deep—  
Good night.

Until the shadow from the earth is cast,  
Until he gathers in his sheaves at last,  
Until the twilight gloom is overpast—  
Good night.

Until the Easter glory lights the skies,  
Until the dead in Jesus shall arise,  
And he shall come, and not in lowly guise—  
Good night.

Until made beautiful by love divine,  
Thou in the likeness of thy Lord shall shine,  
And he shall bring that golden crown of thine—  
Good night.

Only "Good Night," Beloved, not farewell,  
A little while, and all his saints shall dwell  
In hallowed union, indivisible—  
Good night.

Until we meet again before his throne,  
Clothed in the spotless robes he gives his own,  
Until we know, even as we are known—  
Good night.

Have you noticed what our Lord said to his Apostles when he told them of Lazarus' death? He said, "I am glad for your sake that I was not there." He stresses a great value that the death and raising of Lazarus was to have for them and those who should come after them. It was to be the great demonstration that he is the Life, second only in value for our faith to his own Resurrection. It manifests the completeness of his mastery of the humanity which he had taken. He who is Essential Life shows how great is the power of that Life—a power that easily triumphs over the power of



death. As we stand by the open grave and hear his summons: "Lazarus, come forth"; and see "Him that was dead come forth bound hand and foot in grave clothes," we are prepared for our Lord's own Resurrection. For how could he who has such power over death be himself bound by it? We are prepared for our own death which we now understand can be but a passing incident to those who have been united to the Essential Life.

But there is another truth that lies in our Lord's word which casts much light on the divine method of our education. It brings out the fact that that education is along the lines of sacrifice. As God in Christ willingly sacrificed himself, so he does not hesitate to demand sacrifices of his children. It is involved in the vocation of the child of God that he be ready at the divine call to offer himself, glad that his Father has provided him somewhat to offer, and will accept this service at his hand.

In order that our Lord might thus demonstrate his mastery of life and death it was necessary that Lazarus should suffer and die. Do we shrink from the sacrifices that God asks of us? It is written that "Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus." Let that sink into our hearts; when God asks us for sacrifice, he is asking us to serve him. For the most part we are sent out on some hidden path of service the meaning of which we do not

see. What is required of us is not to understand, but to act in loyal faith. The explanation will come in time. He said to an Apostle: "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Lazarus' burden was of the heaviest. He was called to suffer, to die, and to be called back from death, only once more to pass the same experience. *Jesus loved Lazarus*, and because he loved him he could ask of him this great service. We know that we shall not ask in vain of those whom we love and who love us—for *Lazarus loved Jesus*. I dwell often on this coming back of Lazarus, not in idle curiosity as to what he had experienced in the three days, but in wonder at the love of our Lord that must have been his that our Lord could ask of him this great thing. There are not many, I fancy, of whom our Lord could have asked so much. Let us think of that when next our Lord calls us to any suffering or loss—that God is proposing to us a mode of service, proposing it to us because he trusts us. There are other reasons, no doubt, why we are called to suffer; but this at least is one of them; that God loves us so much and so trusts our love of him, that he feels that he can trust us for a little with the bearing of his Cross, and that we will bear it gladly and with unfailing faith.

It is another form of the same divine asking that

we see when we look at the case of Mary and Martha. There had been to them the anxious days of waiting by the brother's sick-bed; there had been the feeling that there was one who could help, if only they could reach him; there had been the disappointment that he did not come. We seem to read between the lines of the story that the sisters were expectant of our Lord—that they felt that he must know and would come. But the brother died and was laid in the tomb and hope faded. Even the onlookers at the meeting of our Lord and the sisters, felt that this was a case where he might be expected to intervene with that power that he had so often exercised on behalf of the ill:—"Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind have caused that even this man should not have died?" They felt that the love that our Lord bore to the family at Bethany created an obligation of helpfulness toward them. What they could not see was that the obligation was mutual—that there was an obligation of love toward our Lord. Our Lord is calling into activity both sides of the relation. Because their faith and love was so great that it could bear any strain he might put upon it, he asked them to endure the pain of their brother's illness and death in order that he might "Manifest his glory" and show forth the power of the Life which he is. Their sufferings were incident to the perpetual wit-

ness of our Lord's power in the raising of Lazarus, and they were rewarded by the renewed evidence of his love that his action toward them showed.

It is from such stories as this that we learn the inner meaning of suffering. We simply darken counsel when we declaim against the justice of the world-order, and deny that wisdom and love are visible in a world in which pain prevails. The thought of our time shows its superficiality and incompetence to deal with spiritual problems, in the impatience and bitterness of its utterances in regard to the suffering that is in the world. That is because it declines to study the action of Jesus as the perfect revelation of God. It has created an ideal of comfort as the last word of a world which is governed by justice, and denounces a God who will not live up to its ideal. But from the action of Jesus we learn that comfort is not the ideal of God for his creatures, but the passion of love which draws them to union with himself. Love lives above comfort, and is eager for service and sacrifice; and the most eager of all loves to give itself unstintingly, is the love of God. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son," and the son having "loved his own, loved them unto the uttermost." It is a mark of our union with our blessed Lord that we love thus without limit,—that we so love that we understand that back of all God's

asking of us for sacrifice is his perfect love. We have learned that even the sharpest pain of separation from those we love, may be met without any tinge of bitterness or rebellion, met with glad looking on to a union re-knit in a deeper love.

"Oh, blest! It is for us, not thee, we grieve!  
 Yet even so, ye voices, and you tide  
 Of souls innumerable that panting heave  
 To rhythmic pulses of God's heart, and hide  
 Beneath your myriad booming breakers wide  
 The universal life invisible,  
 Give praise! Behold, the void that was so still,

"Breaks into singing, and the desert cries—  
 Praise, praise to thee! praise for thy Servant, Death,  
 The Healer and Deliverer! From his eyes  
 Flows life that cannot die; yea, with his breath  
 The dross of weary earth he winnoweth,  
 Leaving all pure and perfect things to be  
 Merged in the soul of thine immensity!

"Praise, Lord, yea, praise, for this our Brother Death  
 Though also for the fair mysterious veil  
 Of life that from thy radiance severeth  
 Our mortal sight, for these faint blossoms frail  
 Of joy on earth we cherish, for the pale  
 Light of the circling years, we praise thee too:—  
 Since thus as in a web thy spirit through

"The phantom world is woven:—Yet thrice praise  
 For him who frees us! Surely, we shall gain,  
 As guerdon for the exile of these days,

Oneness with thee; and as the drops of rain,  
Cast from the sobbing cloud in Summer's pain,  
Resume their rest in ocean, even so we,  
Lost for a while, shall find ourselves in thee."

We all face death; but we face it unshirkingly in him who is its Conqueror, who is the Resurrection and the Life of all who die in him. Conscious of being in him we look out with eyes in which there is no terror toward the setting sun and note that for us the clouds are taking on the autumnal splendors which tell of the fast approaching end of the world—of the "little day" of our lives. Old age comes on, and we feel it come with serenity of mind. There is, no doubt, an old age that is an horrible thing—hard, rebellious, godless. We feel under its phenomena a fierce restlessness, the lack of any peace with God, any trust in Christ, any communion with the Blessed Spirit. The aged are often like men being dragged to execution, fruitlessly struggling against the inevitable. All this is too terrible to think of. And it is little better when the approach of death is met with a dumb Stoicism, or with eyes in which we see the fear that no one speaks of. The priest is called to bedsides, where he is warned by foolish physicians and doubting friends that he must not speak of death or the sacraments lest fear should take a few hours from a life already spent. That is a horrible fear, and one



that we should arm ourselves against ere the hour of our departing strikes. It is guarded against by a life in Jesus, a life consciously committed to him in all its ways and all its hours, a life that we feel will not be shattered but crowned by death. To those who have found Jesus to be already their Resurrection and their Life, death is but the going out to him—the discovering of a face that they have long wished to see. The oncoming of age is felt to be his approach, and as it comes there is a thinning of the veils that hide him now. Calm and serene those aged ones wait; their days are marked by an ever deepening peace. You catch a glimpse of them when they think that they are alone, and the lips are murmuring a prayer which is a speaking with Jesus whom they seem to see, for their faces are lit with the light of his presence and their eyes smile at visions which are invisible to us. The mysteries of the hidden life have been revealed to them. They speak out of a rich experience of the things they have seen and known. Their laid up treasure of loved ones is very near to them—they can now almost speak across the ever-narrowing space that separates them. There is a growing silence, for they have not much more to say to this world and its interests. The peace of God is already upon them; they meet the “last enemy” in the realized love of the Father:

Into the silent, starless Night before us,  
Naked we glide;  
No hand has mapped the constellations o'er us,  
No comrade at our side,  
No chart, no guide.

Yet fearless toward that midnight, black and hollow,  
Our footsteps fare;  
The beckoning of a Father's hand we follow—  
His love alone is there,  
No curse, no care.

Let us, then, rejoice in death, looking to the  
meeting that is beyond when "we shall know even  
as we are known."

"Thou hast embarked; thou hast made the voy-  
age; thou art coming to the shore; now land!"

I AM HE THAT LIVETH AND WAS DEAD.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord —*

I am he that liveth and was dead.

*Let us picture —*

THE Risen Lord as he appeared to St. John. There are several visions in which our Lord appeared to the Apostle whom he loved. He walks amid the Golden Candlesticks and has the Seven Stars in his hands ; he appears as the Lamb slain for the sins of the world ; or again, he is the Lamb standing on Mount Sion surrounded by the hosts of the Pure. Let us see him as in this last vision, while the New Song goes up to the accompaniment of the music of the harpers harping with their harps. We see the Throne, and the Living Creatures and the Elders, and, surrounding them the "hundred and forty and four thousand having his Name and the Name of his Father writ-

ten in their foreheads." These have entered into the joy of their Lord. And as we watch them there, we feel, do we not? that their earthly life is justified. "These are they whom men aforetime had in derision and made a proverb of reproach; whose life, they counted madness and their end without honor. But now they are seen to be numbered among the children of God, and their lot to be among the saints." If we would from time to time look into heaven through the eyes of St. John, we would run less danger of a false estimate of the meaning of this life. The real meaning of life can only be read in its outcome. And the meaning of the life of the saints is seen to be that they dwell in the presence of their Master, and that they follow him whithersoever he goeth. Look once more at the Lamb and the multitude of his Holy Ones; listen once more to the Voice as the voice of many waters.

*Consider, first —*

That we are constantly to judge of life by some fragment of it, some passing experience, some merely temporary phase of existence. We hardly ever pause to make the attempt to relate the present experience to the whole meaning of life. We say, perhaps, that we cannot know the whole meaning of life; but we can, in broad outline. We do know

the purpose of God for life, the end to which life tends if we cling to that purpose. We can read the issue of human life because we can read the issue of our Lord's life. We know that God's purpose for us is that, like our Lord, we should triumph over death and pass, by means of our joyful Resurrection, to be with him forever. Consider, that pain and trial, struggle and suffering, we know to be part of the discipline that issues in triumph over death and eternal association with him who through his death and Resurrection passed to the Throne of his Kingdom. Our Lord is not pictured to us, after his Resurrection, as enthroned in solitary grandeur over a world of conquered subjects; but he is pictured as living in the closest intimacy with all those who have faithfully followed the steps of his most holy life. His prayer is answered, and where he is, there are his servants also. When stripped of the gorgeous symbolism wherewith St. John has clothed his visions, the heavenly world is a very human world: a world of love and sympathy and joy and constant intercourse of the Redeemer with one another and with their Lord. It is not at all, as it has been imagined, a world so artificial and unreal as to be repulsive; it is a world where human life developed to its highest capacity, is all the more beautifully human because it is filled with the divine.

*Consider, second —*

That the conquest over death, which is the essential preliminary to our entrance into the Life of the Blessed, is not a thing that begins when we die—that we may therefore excuse ourselves from considering till we die; but our conquest of death begins now. We have already entered into Life. All that part of our experience that we can accurately characterize as Christian is a part of the permanent acquisition of life, an earnest of the life of heaven that we are to experience more fully hereafter. We have not to wait till the morrow of death to know the meaning of love and joy and peace; to know the reality of communion with God. The fruits of the spirit are not perishable fruits that fall from our lives, leaving no trace. They are abiding fruits, that are garnered unto Life Eternal. It is ours now to “taste and see how gracious the Lord is.” Every spiritual victory that we gain, every spiritual experience of which we reap the fruit, takes its place in the eternal acquisitions of life. They are victories won over death; that is, victories the results of which death cannot destroy. Our life is a continuous whole, each stage issuing from the preceding stage, each experience growing out of the preceding experience. Let us learn to judge of our activities from



the point of view of their eternal values—learn to distinguish the wood, hay, stubble, from the silver and gold and precious stones that will endure the fires of the judgment. Death can have no terrors for those who have already passed from death unto Life; those whose association with our Lord now is so intimate that death can only result in the strengthening of the bonds of affection, not in their rupture. “Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end:” let us so love him.

*Let us, then, pray —*

For deeper love and more conscious association with our Lord now. Let us pray to shape our lives always with conscious reference to their end, which is to be with our Lord.

O God, who by Christ’s Resurrection restorest us to Life Eternal; raise us up to the Author of our salvation, who is seated at thy Right Hand; that he who came to be judged for our sake, may come to judge in our favor, Jesus Christ, thy only Son, our Lord.

We give thee thanks, O God the Father, who hast delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of thy Son; grant therefore, we pray thee, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, he may raise us up in his love

to joys eternal; through the same Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord.

. . . . .

What we are shown in the Book of the Revelation is the Christ who has triumphed. The work of redemption is over; past is that wondering life of ministry which is the perfect expression of the sympathy of God; over are the pain and weariness which were the outcome of his efforts to minister to "his own"; past is the Cross on which he had hung looking out over a world that had rejected him, but which thus "lifting up" would some day bring to his feet. By his victory he has won the right to reign and has passed through the heavens and is set down at the Right Hand of God. When St. John opens the door of heaven that we may look in, we see our Lord acting there on behalf of the work of his Incarnate Body: he is sending messages to his earthly Church. The care that he shows for those whom he has left to carry on his work proves to us that he is the same Jesus whom we have known in the pages of the Gospel. His attitude in heaven toward men is the same attitude that he maintained on earth, the attitude of close and personal love. We feel, indeed, that as the Ascended Head of the Church he is continuously watching over every detail of the life of his Body. The letters that he sends from heaven to the "Seven

churches" have a wider intent than the warning and encouragement of the particular church to which they are sent. They have the further intention that they reveal once for all our Lord's attitude to the Church on earth. Every detail of its life is interesting to him, he is watching its sins and its failures, its hopes and successes, and that not with the silent watchfulness of an interested spectator, but with an energetic watchfulness which intervenes constantly in the course of the Church's life with praise and blame, with reward and punishment. The growth and the dying of Christian communities is not merely due to the operation of the laws of social development, it is not a department of anthropology or biology, but is due to the action of our Lord. The Church is being continuously judged and disciplined that it may respond better to the will of its Risen Master, that it may more completely embody the mind of its Ascended Head.

"I am he that liveth and was dead": that is his message to his Church on earth. And there is great significance in that backward look—"and was dead." There is in it a recording of all his human experience, the suggestion that by that experience he triumphed and won for his humanity the place that it now holds at the Right Hand of the Father. He has won the right to be the Head of the Body. It is no transient victory, the results of which are

presently to be laid aside. Our humanity in him has reached the state of stable union with the divine—"and behold I am alive forever more." Our risen humanity has become central in the spiritual world, it has become the permanent medium of the divine action for the spiritualization of man. Through it man attains the end for which he was created. Heaven is no state to which choice souls are translated after having been rescued from the sinfulness that is in this world; but is the term of the evolution of the spiritual man. The evolution which began with the dawn of life upon this planet, and proceeds to its consummation in the production of the animal man, and there came to an end, no high physical form being produced or to be expected, was the basis of another and higher evolutionary process, a process still going on, by which the spiritual man is brought forth. That process only begins here; we see but its first stages: its completion is wrought out in the union of the human and the divine, and is revealed in its entirety in heaven, where the soul shall be once more united to the body, but to a changed and spiritualized body, fit to be the medium of the spirit's action. This process is completed in Christ, and is proceeding in all those who are in Christ. The first stages of this evolutionary process are what we are now witnessing in this world, evidenced by the conflict

of light and darkness, the tremendous clash of spiritual and material ideals, which mark the now existing world-order. Our lives are set on the battlefield where the opposed forces swing and sway, are intertwined in perplexing combinations, where the front is ever changing, and the inrush of new combatants, on this side or that is compelling new formations. What seem to us social crises, the rise and fall of ecclesiastical systems, new phases of thought, new philosophies and morals, are but these shifting combinations of the battlefield, whereby the process of the spiritual evolution of man is taking place. It seems to us, pausing in the midst of the battle and trying to get a glimpse through the smoke and dust of the groupings on the field, that the battle now sways this way and now that, that it is uncertain on which side will lie the victory, or, indeed, that the powers of darkness are in possession of the field. But there are times when the wind of the Spirit clears the sky, and our raised eyes see a Throne set amid the glories of the heavens, and we catch the words of the anthem that drifts out, "worthy is the Lamb which was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing . . . blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." And we hear a voice, a human

voice, saying, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forever more." And we know that all is well upon the battle-field over which floats the banner of the Resurrection.

And it is well too with each one of those who goes out to battle under that banner. The tendency of our narrow outlook is to make us timid and pessimistic. We dwell on death as though that were the final thing. All things end in death, we say with a sigh. There is a touch of morbidity in the mind that makes the hectic tones of autumn, or the dying glow of the sunset, the characteristic symbols of human life. It is life that is imperishable,—not the waning Autumn but the resurgent Spring is the symbol of our life. We only seem to die, we do not die utterly. He who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" has our lives in his keeping. You shall go out and see the whole hillside lying sun-baked and bare under the cloudless heaven which long has restrained its rain. The fire may sweep over it, and it shall be as a blackened desolation before your eyes. But let the heavens be overcast and the rain come, and it is but hours before it springs to vivid greenness. So it is often with the life of our spirit. There are times when its ebb runs very low, when unwatered



by any rain, life lies like the hillside, sun-baked and brown. The pitiless glare of the world-sun has dried it up; the heat of passion has exhausted it. Its energies have vanished. Such a period is apt to come upon us in middle life when the ideals of youth have lost their fascination or been disappointed, and the ideals of maturity are yet to come. In the interval, we have felt the fascination of a discordant set of ideals, the ideals of the market-place of this world. Our spiritual powers are thrust into the background and their pleading with us is not listened to. How one trembles for the man in the moment of his worldly success. His life is ever harder baked by the sun of prosperity and by the hot winds of care. In this "fullness of bread," we ask, is materialism going to master him? Already the life of the Spirit is waning and its meaning is being lost. The special times that belong to God are being absorbed by the need of pleasure, of exercise, of society; they are snatched as brief breathing-places, but the breath that he takes in these divinely provided pauses, is no longer the breath of divine refreshment, his failing strength no longer seeks the food of God: the weary brain and nerve seek relief, not in the repose of God's peace, but in the motor, the golf-links, the club, the week's-end. God fades out of the consciousness; the conscience is relieved by "good works," that is, checks flung to

charity. The disease of the strong, the able, the successful, the characteristic disease of middle age, is upon the man—confidence in the stability and completeness of this world. It is pity! For the beginnings of the man's life had lain elsewhere. "Thou *hast been* in Eden, the garden of God."

But it may be that our vision, which sees only death, is deceived by the brownness of the sun-baked hillside. It may be that with the coming of the rain, the Autumn rain, there will be a Resurrection of seemingly dead things. It may turn out that where we saw death there was but suspended animation. The beneficent coming of age may be as the dew of the Spirit falling upon the life. As the ideals of youth palled and vanished, so may the ideals that succeeded them, and the man come back to the ideals of life as a thing spiritually understood. He may come out of the experience of the Ecclesiast with powers purified and chastened, not to find all the work of man vanity and vexation of the spirit, but to find it the medium of the vision of God. God is in the stone-strewn desert of middle age though he saw it not, and missed the vision of the ladder set up to heaven. But if we fail to find God there, he has other ways to reach us and other visions to send, and one may break upon our sight in the very heart of the sunset.

It is because of the enduring power of life that

we are enabled to hope for many souls in whom, for the present, we can see small signs of any spiritual quality at all. The seed hidden for centuries in the wrappings of the mummy which may spring and grow and be fruitful when it is planted in the earth, is a symbol of the dormant grace of the sacraments which abides in the soul, ready once more to vivify it if we give it place. We spend endless time and labor in training each generation of the young, well knowing that after a few years our work will seem lost and our labor vain. We know that in many cases, perhaps the majority, the world will grasp them and that they will be sucked into the whirlpool of sensuality, swept away by the tides of passion, sunk to the level of the Christless life of those whom their work in the world will give them for companions. They will be unable to bear the strain of loneliness, "of being peculiar," of standing outside of the daily habits of their society. This is inevitable, considering the moral and spiritual weakness of the immature. But we trust to the seed that we have sown, the abiding power of the Life that waits and watches. After long years, it may be, the world-weary or sin-weary man or woman comes back to the sacraments. After long neglect the baptized find their way to the confessional. For God waits long and works through

many ways and the weariness of worldliness and the satiety of success are among them:

“Let him be rich and weary, that at least  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast.”

Although our Lord never experienced this suspended animation of the soul, he understood it and sympathized with those who were suffering from it. In those parables which deal with the finding of lost things such a state of things seems to be in his mind. The sheep that has strayed still belongs to the flock. The coin that is lost is still in the house. The hope of recovery is therefore great. To us, many a life seems spiritually hopeless, where there is, no doubt, a basis for God's hope. We are all too prone to assume that the state of souls is what we see it to be. But there are many souls with which God has hidden dealings: he brings the pressure of his life to bear upon them in ways that we cannot follow. We discover sometimes that God has been keeping his hold upon the soul where we had thought all intercourse was ended. There is no more dangerous judgment than the judgment that we pass on the spiritual state of man. It turns out that the man whom we had thought to have abandoned all belief is still saying his prayers, is day by day committing his life to the love and mercy of God. That

woman whom we thought altogether given over to the world, it appears has never wholly given up the sacraments. That, you say, may be simply the survival of old habits which there has not been the energy or courage to break with. Possibly: but is it not also possible that these survivals are still points of vital contact with God? That they represent a hold, however slight, still maintained by the divine life? We, quite unconsciously, no doubt, fall into the way of imposing our ecclesiastical systems upon God; but even so far as they represent the will of God they are but directive of our action, and not limitations upon God's action. Let us be sure that the love of God and the Life of God penetrate to places where we find it difficult to conceive its entrance, and have dealings with the souls that to our eyes are altogether separate from God. May this thought be to us a basis of hopefulness and untiring prayer.

When we find our own spiritual life losing something of its buoyancy, growing dim and tarnished by its contacts with the unspiritual, our attitude toward ourselves should be quite different from that that we assume toward others. We need to deal with ourselves with severity, noting the first incursions of sloth and self-indulgence. We perhaps sometimes say to ourselves that this perpetual struggle to maintain the brightness of our spiritual

life, this constant exertion against the inroad of the tempting world, is disheartening: we need, at least, times of distraction and rest. But if we have seriously entered upon the spiritual life as the training of the spiritual man in Christ Jesus, that can only be a passing mood. The work of evolution is unceasing; and when the spiritual creature ceases to advance it begins to degenerate. Struggle is the evidence of persistent life; and what we need to find in ourselves is the evidence of that life seeking its due expression, of which the sense of struggle is symptomatic. For remember the recurrence of a clouded condition of soul does not imply any weakening of the power of God, any withdrawal of the divine presence. This morning, as I write, the triumphant August sun is pouring its streams of heat and light and energy upon the world, and the streets throb with the intense heat and the lake quivers and sparkles as myriads of silver stars dance on the pale blue of its surface. This afternoon all may be changed; clouds may cover the face of the sky and the streets be gray and the lake a sheet of sombre lead. It will seem as though the power of the sun were lessened; but is not; that is only a seeming. So the clouds may cover the sky of our lives, clouds that rise out of our passions, our weaknesses, our pride or sloth. And we, not paying much heed to the clouds



at their coming, but thinking of our own symptoms, say that the power of Christ is growing less in our lives. But the real power of Christ is not lessened. It shines on there behind the clouds. What the clouds do is to hinder its activity on us, they obstruct the rays. The failure is our failure of response, due to the distraction and dissipation of our energies. Dispel the clouds by energetic action and you will find Christ what he always has been, the infinite source of energy.

As we turn from our personal struggles for the perfecting of our spiritual lives that the power of our union with our Lord may more and more pervade us, to consider those lives as merged in and become part of the general life of the Church, we understand that the presence of the Living Christ at the Right Hand of the Father is the earnest and pledge of the final success of the Church. However its fortunes may seem clouded its essential life is secure and its future will manifest the perfect expression of that life. The power by which it lives is not the slowly exhausted power which we find behind purely human movements, that run their course and die because of the finitude of the energy that generated and supports them. The life of the Church is the life of its Risen Head. The Church is at any time an imperfect expression of that life—sometimes its expression of it seems al-

most to fail. But the Church is always capable of revival because it is capable of drinking anew from the infinite fountain of its life. Human life organized in societies runs its course and exhausts itself in special social forms, and then new forms have to be created, through revolution or otherwise. The destruction of the one form is the birth-throes of the next. But there is endless vitality in the Body of Christ. Empires rise and fall; nations grow and perish; and they will continue so to do. But the Church remains, remains organically one, through its union with its Risen Master, though to our weak vision it is shattered and ready to perish. Nations pass and languages become dead, but whatever the nation or language there is always the priest who offers the holy sacrifice and distributes the Angelic Food. Sciences and philosophies, the human ways of looking at the universe, change from generation to generation, and present new formulas; but the priest at the altar continues and will continue, till the last hour strikes, to say, "I believe in God." You cannot kill Christianity because you cannot kill Christ. He has passed beyond the reach of death, and "behold he is alive forever more." Alive: and on the other side of death. "I am he that liveth and was dead."

Christianity is the life of Christ in human souls knitting those souls into union with himself. You

can kill the life of this or that soul; you can destroy the religion of this or that nation; as you can kill this or that tree in the forest or strip the whole hillside bare; but when spring comes, nature, that is God, will clothe the hillside with a new life, which yet is not new, but a new manifestation of the one Life that is always in the world. You cannot kill Christianity because it is the self-expression of God. Atheists are of artificial manufacture and have no power of self-transmission. We need never fear for the life of the Church, but only for our fidelity in the manifestation of it.

The self-expression of our Lord in the life of the universe takes many forms. The Church which is his Body is the most complete of these. But wherever there is truth, or beauty, or goodness, these must be referred to the action of his Spirit—that divine Spirit that proceedeth from the Father and from him. We cannot afford to be negligent of these forms of his self-expression. I want, for a moment, to dwell upon these because I have before this spoken of them from the point of view of their imperfections and weaknesses. I would not, for example, have anything that I have said in regard to philanthropy and the service of society be understood in depreciation of such forms of human activity. I am very clear that as substitutes for the religion of Christ, as forms of activity proposed as

containing all that is essential in Christianity and as the probable successors of "The dying Church," they necessarily arouse Christian opposition. But such presentation of them is quite needless, it ought to be possible to carry on works for the social betterment of man, without at the same time making loud boasting of their superiority to Christianity and depreciatory remarks about "The Churches." It is one of the discouraging notes of the littleness and infirmity of human nature that it seems incapable of undertaking any work without a sense of superiority and vain-glory, which arouse quite unnecessary antagonism. The impulse to philanthropy and social service ought to be generated, and is generated, wherever the Spirit of Christ works. It has always been generated within the Christian Church, as witness, to touch only one feature of its action, the numberless institutions of beneficence with which it has covered the face of the Christian world. And this same Spirit which has inspired the humanitarian action of the Church, is visible in humanitarian action everywhere, even where it pointedly detaches itself from the Church. But it is no less the Spirit of Christ that is working and it is no less the Spirit of Christ that works in nations which have never heard of him. Let us be glad when we find evidences of that Spirit among Japanese and Mohammedans. Let us welcome it among

non-sectarian groups and ethical culture societies. We constantly meet men and women who have abandoned what they regard as the narrowness of "theological systems" to give themselves utterly to good works. Let us dwell, not on what we are obliged to think their mistakenness, but upon the Spirit of the master which finds so much response in their lives. Oftentimes they afford us an object lesson of single heartedness and zeal and sacrifice which we would do well to lay to heart. If we are unable to go all the way with them in theory, we can at least sympathise with them in practice, and feel that they, too, have their mission—a mission of carrying the Spirit of Christ to places and to souls that we have been unable to reach. It is to our shame that we have not done so. Let us not look with disfavor on those who are doing what we have left undone. The spirit that seeks to aid any of Christ's little ones who are hard-pressed and buffeted in the battle of life, is altogether admirable and altogether his, even when mistaking him and its own origin it seeks to show its own independence of him.

So it is in the ways of thought. We should welcome all honest attempts to solve the problems which human life presents. We who are Christians and adhere to the dogmatic system of the Church are ever too ready to denounce those who are seek-



ing truth on other lines and by other means. We are apt to assume that our interpretation of Christianity and *Christianity* are necessarily coincident. What we believe about the Bible is too often in our thought the same thing as the meaning of God in Holy Scripture. We therefore look with suspicion upon the devoted scholars who have reached conclusions in the matter of Biblical learning which are not what we have been accustomed to believe. They may indeed be mistaken, but so may we. There are a great many questions that we may ask to which there are no answers. Possibly answers may be found for them some day, or perhaps not; but in the meantime, it is well to wait patiently, with an open mind. It is well to remember too, that the confidence with which critics and specialists put forward conclusions is no measure of their truth. Immature and unpracticed minds are thrown into a state of unrest when they find that the universe is larger than our knowledge of it. This is especially true when they find that the Church has no ready-made answers for all the new problems which emerge as the result of man's persistent questioning of the world and life. If the Church is the Custodian of revealed truth and has authority to declare it, then, such seems to be their inference, it ought to put an end to intellectual unrest, at least within its own borders. If there emerge differences of



opinion in matters of belief and practice within the Church, the Church ought to settle the questions at once, by the voice of authority. But the authority of the Church is authority to declare and teach the faith, which it sufficiently does through its creeds and liturgy. The faith that it declares and teaches is the faith committed to it. It has no power or commission to go beyond that either in making new articles of faith or developing new dogmas from theological germs. The authority of the Church is not at all like the heathen oracles which provided answers for perplexed questioners on all matters under the sun. The fascination that the Roman Church exercises over many minds lies in its pretensions to possess this oracular power. Of course controversies are not, and cannot be, settled by any such short and easy method. It is possible for ecclesiastical authority to suppress discussion within the limits of its own jurisdiction, but, even so, nothing is really settled, and the pursuit of truth goes on until conclusions are reached or the search abandoned as hopeless. The authority of the Church is not to declare all truth, but authority to teach that special body of truth which is contained in the Christian revelation.

When it is objected to the Anglican church that it lacks authority, there is a confusion in the mind of the objector as to the meaning of authority.

The Anglican church has and has exercised the authority which properly belongs to the Church in setting forth clearly and definitely the Christian revelation in its creeds and formulas of worship. This is a proper exercise of authority; and, inasmuch as it does not claim to be the whole Church, it does not attempt to exercise that authority to formulate credal statements which it belongs only to the whole church, assembled in general council, to formulate. Neither does it feel under obligation to accept such statements when formulated by any other part of the Church. There is indeed no evidence that the faith of the Church needs any further developed statement than it has received. The faith Christendom has lived by from the earliest times is adequate to the needs of our time. There would seem to be no ground for the Church to abandon its conception of its obligation to teach the faith committed to it, and embark on a career of question-answering for the sake of relieving its children from the difficulty of making up their own minds, or in the vain hope that it will thereby still controversies. But what is, in fact, meant when the lack of authority of the Anglican Church is spoken of, is not this authority to state the faith, but something quite other: that is, its failure to enforce discipline to the extent that critics think desirable. "You can never be certain

that the teaching of any two Anglican parishes will be alike."

It can, of course, be truly answered that in all Anglican churches the same faith is taught—taught authoritatively by the creeds and liturgy. This teaching is the teaching of the Church, and it is well to stress that point. It removes the reproach that the Church teaches error. What, however, is in the objector's mind is that the Church tolerates teaching in the pulpit that is contrary to its own teaching in its formularies; in other words, it does not enforce discipline. That, no doubt, is perfectly true. But it is not self-evident, as the objector seems to think it is, that rigid enforcement of discipline is the mark of a standing or falling Church. The ill results that follow laxity of discipline are sufficiently evident. They produce, no doubt, much perplexity in the minds of people who put all truths on the same plane, and are unable to distinguish between what belongs to the Catholic faith and what does not; and are unable to distinguish between the teachings of the Church and the opinions of an individual. But are the evils greater than those that result from such rigidity of discipline as prevents men from thinking at all, or daring to say what they think; and unfits them to deal with the new problems of life and thought which are continually arising? Although at times we may be vexed or disheartened

or ashamed by the unrebuked utterances of some member of the Anglican communion; though at times we may find very practical difficulties arise from the existence of widely diverging opinions, yet we are infinitely better so, than reduced to a dead level of thoughtless uniformity. After all, differences which are felt to be important are the evidence of interest and life. The conviction that it has got hold of an important truth, has the effect, it would seem, of injecting into the human system a stimulant that arouses the spirit of combativeness; we could desire that it would rather arouse the spirit of charity; but as human nature is, so must we take it.

And we have this truth for our comfort: that the Christian Church is not a human debating society working to its own ends, but the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth. Its Living Head is presiding over its fortunes and his Spirit is guiding it to its consummation. We have long ago got rid of the notion that what God works through must be perfect, or that what he creates must be without blot. Flawlessness and stainlessness are attributes of the finished work, not of the work in its formative state. We have only to read over these Epistles of the Ascended Christ—he that is living after death—to understand how his work goes on under the conditions of human imperfec-

tions. It is as true as it is trite to say, that it is just because of our imperfections that the work of the Incarnation exists. The imperfections in the working of a system are no ground for doubt of its truth. In the matter of imperfection the divisions of Christendom are not well occupied in throwing stones at one another. We are much better occupied in working diligently under the conditions in which we find ourselves in the hope that fidelity to the truth we see will result in a large measure of revelation; and that honest work for God's kingdom will hasten the time when it shall finally come. That coming will not be hastened by those who seek through emphasis on our division to stir up strife. It will not be hastened by those who pretend that divisions are of no importance. But it will be hastened by those who, feeling with intensity the importance of truth and the beauty of charity, seek to hold the one in the bonds of the other.

In spite of our divisions, our narrowness, our lack of charity, our anxiety for the triumph of our opinions rather than truth, we are members of God's Church and witnesses of his working. He who so over-ruled the bitter divisions of the early Church so as to make it the instrument of the setting forth of his revelations and the conversion of Europe, can still work through us and our divisions



to a further advance in his kingdom. He is doing so in the notable conquests in the mission field. Perhaps it is by the new churches of the mission field that many of the problems that we have not been able to solve will gain their solution. The new Christians of China and Japan and India will surely not, with Christianity, take over the teasing ecclesiastical problems in which we have entangled ourselves. They can hardly be expected to spend much time or energy upon the opinions of Cranmer or the Caroline divines. Our not very dignified squabbles about the "change of name" can hardly interest them. The field is free for them to accept the faith once delivered to the saints as it was delivered, and not as it has been obscured by the controversies of the Reformation period, which have gone very dead—only that we find their ghosts still haunt us. They do not have to take up the battle-cries of present parties, and insist on the maintenance of now meaningless names, out of loyalty to their grandfathers. Christianity, in its march from West to East, can well leave behind much of the baggage it has accumulated from human sources. If the Reformation was the washing of the face of the Church, it has accumulated dust and grime enough in the centuries since to justify another lustration. Perhaps it is not too much to hope, remembering who is the true Ruler of the



fortunes of the kingdom, that there will come a day when Peter will be converted, and set himself to strengthening his brethren, in place of abusing and harrowing them. It is well to stay ourselves, at any rate, with such hope; and cultivate a vision that can penetrate beyond the smoke of our conflicts, which tend to obscure the universe for us, to the serene life where the Head of the Church is enthroned in the power of his Risen Life at the Right Hand of the Father. No doubt the time seems long, and we weary of the continual shouting, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." We grow faint while the divisions of Christendom glory in men and in ecclesiastical systems. But the words of the same Apostle who first was made sick with this human pettiness comfort us as they did his loyal followers: "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."



## I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA.

*Let us listen to the words of our Lord—*

I am Alpha and Omega.

*And, let us picture—*

**A** COMMON scene. It is a bed-room that we are looking at; and on the bed there is lying a mother clasping to her breast her first-born child. How she has dreamed over this coming child in the months that have passed. With what care she has prepared for its coming; and now, the hour of her anguish passed, she rejoices that a man is born into the world. See the love-light in her eyes; see her delight in every movement of the child. This thing, which has happened to every mother for unnumbered centuries, is to her a new miracle. If we could see into her soul, what dreams and hopes and plans we should see there; how she

looks out into the future and sees this child growing true and brave and pure answering to all her ideals of manliness. Sometimes, too, we should see fears there—fears lest she should be unequal to the task before her, fear lest the malign forces of life should lay hold of and ruin her child. As we watch her with this being, all-unconscious of its future, lying on her breast, we wonder, not only what the future is to be, but what is the kind of love that is going to play so great a part in the shaping of that future. Is it the passion of a personal possession, or the awe of a great trust. Is she quite sure that God has trusted her with a life that is immortal to be trained for him? Are the visions that fill her mind, visions of a life that finds its meaning only when at length it shall walk, white-robed, by the side of the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb?

*Consider, first—*

That a child is an immortal being whose eternal destinies are being shaped by the influences that are brought to bear on it during the time of its living here. This child has been fashioned under the laws of God, that we commonly call the laws of nature. It comes into the world with tendencies that are the work of the past, tendencies that, with-

in limits, its parents have had under their control. They have transmitted to it something of what they themselves are—their health, their passions, their good and evil. They know from their own lives the elements of the problem that they have to deal with, the factors that need to be eliminated, the weaknesses that need to be made strong. They are not entering upon the task of this child's nature in blindness; it is *their* child, to be trained in the light of its heredity. But God is in its present. It is not merely the resultant of forces that are beyond control; it is subject to forces that they may themselves control. They have it in their power to select, in great measure, the forces and influences that shall determine the child's future. They live in a spiritual universe, and are members of a redeemed race. They have the revelation of the will of God. God has placed at their disposal the gifts and graces which will enable them to bring this child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In the light of their knowledge of themselves and of God's will they may mould the character of this child. There are, no doubt, forces beyond their control, but they are not beyond the control of God; if they do their part as his representatives. Before the child passes under the control of forces that escape them, there have been years of training and discipline which must leave an indelible impress.

*Consider, second—*

What this impress will be will depend on their own wisdom, no doubt; but will depend also, in great measure, on the sort of belief that they have in God. Is God Alpha and Omega to them, the Beginning and the End? There is the question that is before all things critical. Have they a burning, energetic faith in God? It is one thing to bring up a child for the purposes of this world, and a quite different thing to bring it up as one whose life finds its significance in its eternal relation to God. In the one case the life will be shaped for the attainment of immediate and temporary ends; in the other for the attainment of ends that can only be realized in another life. Though the things to be done in the way of external living may be much the same in both cases, the emphasis will be entirely different, the values sought through activity will be unlike. In the one case the gifts of God will be valued for themselves, in the other they will be sought as instruments of ministry. Think of yourself as that child, now grown and come to the fruition of life. What does the life that you are leading mean to you? Is it a life of which God is the beginning, the middle and the end? Is God Alpha and Omega? Have you a living experience of him as the Lord from whom your life proceeds,



and toward whom it is tending? Is your life selected, as to its elements, with reference to its final realization as a life of another world, where God shall be all in all? If God is not the Alpha, the ground of our lives here, he will not be the Omega, the consummation of our lives hereafter. All our Lord's will for us has reference to this, that we should so live his life here that we may live with him in the future. On his throne in heaven he is waiting to receive us.

*Let us, then, pray—*

That our lives may be rooted and grounded in him. Let us pray that we may hold the things of this life at their true valuation, as means of our development into his likeness.

O God, who hast prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding; Pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

. . . . .

Our spiritual life is established in the possession of God. It is consummated in the enjoyment of God. When our Lord says that he is Alpha and Omega he is attributing to himself the title which is the proper possession of God—he is declaring his own

divinity. And as he is Alpha and Omega to us his assertion of divinity becomes the assurance of our spiritual stability.

This title of our Lord is accompanied by the explanation: "which is, and which was, and which is to be." It is this that is declared of our Lord elsewhere: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever." The promises on which faith and hope rest are guaranteed by his unchangeableness.

He is he which was. In the background of human history there has been a divine purpose working toward its end in the redemption of the race. Human life has not been a meaningless drift out of nothingness into nothingness; there has been purpose from the beginning. If we try to trace the wanderings of humanity through the wilderness of this world it is a strangely broken and twisted path that we have to follow. The evolution of the spiritual man is not a straight and easy march along the King's highway from the city of this world to the city of God. There are twists and turns, advances and retreats, recoveries and relapses. But the thing that on the whole has emerged from age to age is an advance in spiritual capacity and interest—a direction of the whole process forward. That, most likely, would seem a saying hard to justify, to many observers of our time. Our own time, they will tell us, whatever its greatness in certain respects,

can hardly be said to show any marked advance in spirituality. But one is apt to be led into a pessimistic observation of our own time because of certain superficial indications which fill up the foreground of vision. There is no doubt much to dishearten. I have perhaps dwelt sufficiently, in the preceding meditations, upon such disheartening features of our time to make it clear that I do not overlook them. Frivolity, worldliness, the lust of amusement, indifference to the deeper issues of life, alienation from religion, the assertion of a false freedom—all these and more are on the surface of things, and are abundantly discouraging. But in fact they are the ever-present phenomena of man's littleness, visible in all times and places of his history. The restless spirit of man beating against the limitations that are imposed upon it by circumstances and striving to escape them generates the phenomena of lawlessness and self-asserting pride which is its form of protest against the restraints it cannot escape. The imprisoned sea, whipped by the wind, dashes itself to foam against the unyielding rocks. And the lawless and reckless dissipations of human beings are as the foam of life whipped by desires it has not learned to control. We are like children, set to learning lessons, who rebelliously waste their time in throwing their books

about. But this is no new thing—it is as old as the world.

More seriously, our troubles are the result of an achieved liberty that we have not yet learned to use. It is difficult to estimate the profound dislocation and unsettlement which has resulted from the triumph of a democratic ideal. We have been made free with a freedom which we do not understand and are as yet unable effectively to use. The disappearance of external authority has not been followed by the emergence of any authoritative principle as the ruling power in life. Freedom still remains for us, license, and the supremacy of our own wills. As a whole we have been engaged this century or more in the attempt to impose our own will on others in the name of freedom. Authority is the imposition of an external will as a limit and guide to our action. It was no right reading of freedom which substituted for ancient forms of authority, the authority of a majority. True freedom means the imposition of limitation upon our own will for the good of the whole. It means sacrifice of self to the highest principle we can find. In the present clash of the wills of parties and classes, striving by any means to gain their own ends, whatever else we have we have not freedom in any real understanding of it. Our democracy is at present generating and upholding what would seem

to be the worst tyranny yet seen—the tyranny of organized groups and interests bent upon the exploitation of the community in favor of their own personal gain. It is difficult to see that we have made any advance in the exchange of former tyrannies for the present ones, whether they be political or industrial.

But there begin to emerge hopeful factors in the situation, which would seem to indicate that progress is not merely our optimistic human way of conceiving things, but a real advance. We are getting rid of the cock-sureness which has been so characteristic of the last century. We are less expectant that all good things come to those who vote. Though we still permit the formation of predatory groups, organized to prey upon the rest of the society, we are less certain that they represent the last words of economic wisdom. We even begin to seek for means by which they can be controlled. We are not so sure that everything that is worth doing, can be done by money and machinery. We are getting beyond the social philosophy which regards social ills as things that “just happen.” and for which nobody is responsible, and are growing a conscience which is markedly uneasy. To be sure our present analysis of the causes of social ills does not inspire confidence; but that we have begun to

suspect that there is such a thing as social responsibility is important.

Moreover, we seem to have outlived materialism, as a philosophy at any rate; and are coming to the conviction that the foundations of life are spiritual. Mechanical views of the universe are giving way to spiritual ones. There is hope, therefore, that we shall before long recognize the power of spiritual motive and the supremacy of spiritual ideal. The appeal for spiritual activity will get listened to; and when spiritual appeal can gain attention as not traversing "the common sense view of life," we can hope for a programme of spiritual religion. At present, no doubt, the emphasis is still upon an unspiritual religion—a religion which makes only such demands upon life as can be met by worldly people without a change of life. I listened not long ago to a sermon which appeared to teach the perfectness of our present industrial system, and left on one the impression that the only person whose money-getting could be held blameable was the office boy who robbed his employer's till. The prosperous gentlemen in the pews seemed to sit up with a proper sense of their probity—but on the whole the sermon had an archaic sound, even to-day. The day seems coming when once more we can feel that neither circumcision profiteth anything nor uncircumcision: when neither capital nor labor,



wealth nor poverty, will be canonized: but the life of the spirit, possible under all outward conditions, will be valued as the proper aim of men. Surely it is only then that we shall attach any intelligible meaning to the creation—when we read the purpose of God in creating man as the purpose of lifting man into union with himself. I believe that there is visible a distinct advance toward an appreciation of spiritual ideals of life, and that in that advance we can see the accomplishment of the purpose of him who was, and still is, life's background.

For he is he which is. And whatever our failure to acknowledge him and, in our self-sufficiency, think that we can manage our own life, and shape society for the best, he is still energetic in the affairs of the world. "My father worketh hitherto, and I work." The purpose of God in bringing all things to him may seem frustrated by human sin and stupidity, but we have the lesson of the Cross to teach us that it is not so. That Cross surely teaches that the self-will and sin of man cannot cancel the purpose of God; that as often as men in what they deem their hour of triumph have raised God upon a cross, there he reigns; that is a sufficient answer to all our timorous doubting and despair of the city of God. God reigns from the Tree. God reigned in the city of Herod and Caiaphas and Pilate; and God reigns in the city of this world to-day. None

of the dark things that happen in the world to-day can shake our faith in that fact. Jesus Christ who was crucified on Friday walked the streets of Jerusalem on Sunday morning. Let the outlook in Church and state be as bad as they will, they will never be worse than they were when the Cross was raised. They can never be darker than they were when the sun set on that first Good Friday. When the supernatural darkness, which was the symbol of the earth's godlessness wrapped the streets of Jerusalem, God still reigned. We need waste no time in lamentations on the state of the world; what we have to fear is that when the darkness of this world passes we be found elsewhere than beside the Cross of Christ. We need to fear lest we despair of his cause, and go back to our homes, thinking that God is dead. Your place and mine is beside the Cross though all, even the disciples, forsake him and flee. There is a divine purpose realizing itself in the world, and we must be found on the side of that purpose: we must be found going after him, bearing whatever crosses it is his will that we should bear. There is no harder or heavier Cross for us than to maintain our loyalty in a society that has abandoned God, whether it is the abandonment of open revolt, or the worse abandonment of merely nominal service. It is not so hard to stand in the ranks with an open enemy at your face, as it is to

stand there with the consciousness that the man at your side may be but half-hearted, or even a traitor. We cannot deny that there is a strain upon us to-day "when we speak with our enemies in the gate"—the strain that comes from not knowing whether they are faithful who stand behind us. But the Cross that we bear is Christ's Cross, and the shadows through which we bear it will break, and the dawn of Easter will come, and we who have gone after him to Calvary shall see him once more in the power of his Resurrection and shall watch him ascend to his Father and ours, and shall be lifted with him to his unpassing peace. He which is, is the guarantee of our triumph.

For he is, also, he which is to be. There is a future in which the as yet unaccomplished purpose of God will gain its fulfillment. We do not look back with tear-filled eyes to an Eden from which we have been banished, but onward to a kingdom yet in its fullness to be revealed. If we have lived the lives of Christians we have lived them in the consciousness of the divine guidance. God has been with us and we know it, and that he will not fail us now. When his full purpose is unveiled—that purpose which now in dark days we are tempted to despair of, we shall be sharers of his triumph. We shall stand by him and see the unfolding glory of God. We shall be citizens of a new heaven and

a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The spiritual life which we enter upon here moves forward to that consummation. It began here with the possession of God, or, perhaps we might better say, with God's possession of us. But we move slowly to the perception and understanding of this so tremendous fact.

What we first consciously experience is not God, but the gifts of God—the bounty of his Providence. As soon as we begin to distinguish the elements of our experience and seek their sense, we are led to assign as the source of some of them the immediate action of God. We learn to listen to his guiding voice as it is made known to us in the conscience, we learn to look for his guidance in the events of life. We find his goodness active in our life from day to day. How many things there are over which we can whisper, "thank God for that," if only our spiritual sight is clear. It is this constant and close investigation of life as to the message it bears us that develops spiritual insight. I know that it can be said that this is merely fanciful—that we are assigning to the Providence of God what are merely natural events, and assuming an individual care of God that we have no right to postulate. You can easily take that view of life which ultimately rests on a belief, not in the care, but the carelessness of God. It was my good fortune, or it befell

me in the Providence of God, (you may read as you choose) to be born in the country and to pass my boyhood in the open air of wooded hills. Many a time since I have taken city-bred boys into the country, and have been impressed by the fact that their minds are an entire blank to all things of the woods and fields. There was hardly a tree or flower or bird or beasts that they could identify. That was inevitable when one came to think of it: but it seemed almost tragic. And yet not altogether inevitable: even within the limitations of a city life there are trees and birds and flowers. A beginning of experience might have been made, and would have been, but for a lack of interest, but for a mind unawakened to certain features of the environment. Is it not much the same in regard to the spiritual environment? That we are not conscious of certain things is as far as possible from proving that they are not present. That we do not see any Providence of God in our lives does not mean that God does not provide. It is altogether a matter of awakened interest. A man without interest in the action of God in life, and with a negative experience, is not a witness against the truth of God's intervention in life—he simply has no testimony to give. He is not a man on the spot who did not see what is alleged to have happened there; he is a man who was else-

where at the time and therefore cannot be called as witness.

But assuming our elementary experience of the gifts of God, the danger of this stage of spiritual development is lest we should take the possession of the gifts of God to be the same thing as the possession of God. In fact, many people stop at that point. The very fullness of their lives kills desire. They do not spiritually develop past the point where they recognize the good Providence of God with a certain measure of thankfulness. The very richness of God's Providence acts as a sedative to the spiritual powers. There is the besetting danger of prosperity, of a quiet and undisturbed life. The gifts are accepted as rewards instead of being used as stimulants. It is therefore sometimes necessary for God to remove the gifts which, so far from raising our souls to seek the Giver, but become screens to hide him. There has to be a stripping bare of the life that it may perceive God.

Or there is this other case: We may confuse the gifts of religion with religion itself. There are people in whom the sensible enjoyment of religion appears to take the place of spiritual experience. They are dependent upon the reaction of religious practices, and begin to be weary of the practices, or to doubt their validity, when the sen-



sible reactions cease or do not at once follow. Every director of souls is familiar with people who doubt of prayer and sacraments because they experience no feelings in connection with them. They complain that they do them no good. Or one knows people whose interest in religion is interest in services or functions, which they enjoy immensely, but who are not frequenters of the sacraments. But all those things are gifts, stepping stones to other things, invitations to go on and find God. The sensible reactions of religion, the joys and consolations that we experience in services and prayers and sacraments, are still only the gifts of God, the effects of religion—*they are not religion itself*. They will cease after a while, and unless we have found God, and our religion is the experience of God himself, the religion that we thought we had will vanish too.

We do not love God rightly until we love him for himself alone, not for what he gives us. As Mme. Guyon points out, we walk by faith, not by sight; and to rely on sensible emotion is still to walk by sight. I repeat, because it is so important; many fail here. They cannot get on with a religion which is not a sensible experience. They want to feel uplifted in prayer and meditation and sacrament. When the feeling is withdrawn they think their religion is gone too; though it is merely that

God is calling them to a deeper faith in himself. The great test of the reality of our spiritual life is to be found in what we can do without. God has not then left the soul when he withdraws the signs of his presence which we were accustomed to trust to. He is working more intimately with the soul, he is asking it to throw away its crutches and walk unaided by anything but himself.

Apply the same test another way: is God the first interest in your life—the Alpha, the beginning of it? There are many grades of religion in our mixed experience; and there are some who think they are religious and are to a certain point, in whose lives God is not the supreme interest. He is subordinated to something else. Take what is a crucial interest—the human affections. What is the nature of the love that we bear to father or mother, husband or wife, child or friend? Have they any spiritual quality? How far do they enter within the control of our religion? How many marriages are there that are contracted from a spiritual point of view, or are spiritually controlled? How many families are there that are envisaged as spiritual entities? Are our friendships formed with a view to the spiritual interests of life, and continued or broken as they minister to them? The answers to these questions that arise spontaneously in our mind no doubt tell a

sad story in very many instances. The disfavor with which the Church has at all times looked upon mixed marriages has not been because of a human dread of losing its members, but because to its illuminated vision it has seemed that marriage in which the deepest human interests are disregarded, in which there is no sympathy in things spiritual, was likely to be unstable. Affections which are not affections in God are badly based. They rest upon elements in character and experience that are shifting and uncertain. There would be fewer divorces and wrecked families, there would be fewer spoiled children and dangerous friendships, if Christian men and women insisted upon carrying their religion into all their lives and made it the foundation of all their actions. But our religion is so distressingly fragmentary—a series of acts, rather than a life controlled and shaped by continuous motive; the possession of things, rather than the possession of God.

If I am God's, all that I possess is God's—a consecrated whole. There would be no murmuring at the sacrifices which religion demands if we held all that we have at the disposal of God. Great possessions are great dangers, because they push the will of God out of life. They tend to make those who have them the patrons of God and his Church rather than the servants. That young

man in the Gospel who seems forever the type of those who have great possessions, would no doubt have been willing, as someone has said, to finance the Galilean ministry; but he could not find it in his heart to fall in behind our Lord and bear the Cross. Any possessions, not great ones merely, tend to make us timid in God's service. We attach ourselves to the gifts of God, and are all the time fearful lest what he has given he should resume. Our piteous fear of the hand of God marks our distance from loving him for himself, not for what he gives, marks the limit for our thought of sacrifice. But though he ask all we have, even life itself, it is the asking of love. If we believe that God is love, why shrink from that love?

I thought the road would be hard and bare,  
But lo! flowers,  
Springing flowers,  
Bright flowers blossoming everywhere.

The night, I feared, would be dark and drear,  
But lo! stars,  
Golden stars,  
Glorious, glowing stars are here!

And my shrinking heart, set free from dread,  
Sees love—  
(Lo! it is love.)  
God's love crowning with death my head.

Our Lord is the end of life—the Omega. He is the end in this sense, that in him is revealed what is God's thought of us. We often question what is God's mind for us; but we have no need to seek. Jesus is not only the revelation of God, he is also the revelation of man. The perfection of our human qualities is seen in him, and also their effectiveness. This is of great moment in the shaping of our lives. It is ground into us by our semi-heathen education and the experience of our early years that there are certain qualities of character that it is of the last importance that we acquire if we are to get on in the world. After a time we discover that it is quite another set of qualities that our Lord commends to us and exemplifies in his own life. I suppose that most of us go on believing in the one set of qualities and practicing the other. The natural result is the feeling of the intense unreality of the qualities that are commended in the Gospel. They belong to a state of things in which we do not live. We hear about them in lessons, read in church, and sermons preached in pulpits, and they seem to us to belong there with the other ecclesiastical furnishings. We do not expect to meet them in shops and offices any more than we expect to find altars and pulpits there. They belong to the religious world; and what is the relation of that to daily life we do not too carefully

ask. Our work-a-day world requires qualities of another order; and we smile to think what would happen to us if we were to attempt to carry the Gospel qualities into that world. What, of course, would happen, is that we should be great Christians, whether we succeeded or failed in the market-place. And we take it altogether too much for granted that we should fail. I fancy that we should not. I do not believe that the qualities of our Lord's human character spell failure in ordinary human life, because they are the perfect human qualities. And there are enough Christian men in the business world to justify this belief. For the qualities are not anti-social. They are not as we too readily assume, the qualities of a hermit life. Our Lord was neither anti-social nor a hermit. We should not only see a reform of business method, but an increase of business efficiency, if the business world were to model its procedure after the principles of the life of Christ. We should find, indeed, that many, if not all, the problems of commercial life, would be solved by the application of our Lord's teaching in every day living. Indeed, those many and insoluble problems are the direct outcome of our not living the life of the Gospel, in our isolation of religion from "practical life." The adoption of a double standard in any department of life means the act-



ual living by the lower standard. That is what people mean when they accuse Christians of hypocrisy. They know men of the highest Christian position whose business methods are marked by utter unscrupulousness.

Our Lord is the end of our life, the ideal toward which we are progressing. The spiritual life moves toward him and finds its completion in him. There is always a beyond in the spiritual life which calls and beckons. You have walked along woodland paths sometime, where the undergrowth shuts you closer and closer, and at last a wall of greenery appeared to bring the path to an end; but at the last step a turn in the path revealed itself and you came out into the open way. So it is in the spiritual life: there are turnings, not endings—always the way leads farther and higher. It seems not a very great or difficult thing when we enter upon it, but it grows in significance from day to day, revealing ever new beauty to our charmed eye. Our eyes which are so used to darkness have to get accustomed gradually to the light. God cannot reveal himself to us all at once; we progress "from glory to glory." But we are drawn on by the vision of the Uncreated Beauty, and our souls thirst for the satisfaction of the Presence of God.

For that in us which is akin to God and is the

medium of God's revelation of himself to us, seems to expand and become capable of embracing even more of the divine self-showing, as it is exercised by use. What we learn of our Lord's beauty and goodness educates the spiritual senses to keener vision and surer touch; and that which they then see and hold becomes in its own the ground of a further advance. Every deepening experience leads us to ever deeper and firmer knowledge, to more confident power of interpretation. *Things* will never open to us the divine secrets; they are revealed only to Lovers who press on to the experience. The secrets of the kingdom are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes—unto the spiritual children whose attribute is love.

“As it is not for those to speak of the beautiful things of sense who have never seen them or felt them beautiful—men blind from birth, let us suppose—in the same way those must be silent upon the beauty in noble pursuits who have never taken to themselves the beauty there is in pursuits and in knowledge and all this order; nor may those speak of the splendor of virtue who have never known the face of justice . . . beautiful beyond the beauty of evening and of dawn. The vision is only for those who see with the soul's sight: these, seeing, will rejoice and all awe will

fall upon them and a trouble deeper than those other things could give, for now they stand before the Authentic Beauty. This is the spirit which must always wait upon beauty in any of its forms, wonderment and a delicious trouble, longing and love and an awe blended with delight. The emotions may be felt for the common beauty as for the seer and these the soul feels in it, all souls in some sense, but those the more deeply that are the more deeply apt to this nobler love—just as all men feel the love of beautiful forms of body, but all are not urged by it equally, and those only are called lovers who love the most.”

It is indisputable that it is only that which is supremely good and beautiful that gives permanent satisfaction; and there is a divine restlessness in man that can only be stilled by the possession of God. “My beloved is mine and I am his” is the only state of rest. It is true that the majority of men, still spiritually unawakened, as they are, pass their lives in other pursuits; but even when they succeed in them they do not experience satisfaction. Men find, no doubt, a certain pleasure in sin, but the time comes when the sinner recognizes his state as a state of slavery. He has bound chains about him that he cannot break. The craving appetites call for satisfaction, but the satisfying of them is no longer joy—it is the compulsion

of bondage. The drunkard and the sensualist are conscious of a subjection to appetite which they are unable to escape from and which ruins their life. They no longer take up the day's dissipation with the exultant joy of youth, but with weariness and painfulness, as those upon whom a dark tasking is laid. And is it not the same with the abuses of life that are less marked? Is there any habit of sin which you know of, of which you do not feel that the Apostles' words are true—"for of whom a man is overcome, of the same that he brought in bondage." The sinner becomes, as someone has expressed it, "the Laocoon of his own serpents," a most vivid picture of the sinner caught, strangled, helpless in the power of appetite he himself has brought to strength. This satiety of sin, if it is nothing else, is the revelation of its own inherent unreason, of its being a blind alley in human experience.

On the contrary, a life that makes God its ideal and end is always finding that new sources of satisfaction are opening before it. Its possessions are daily increased. Its resources are not squandered, but grow with their use. We tire of everything else—we never tire of our Lord. Each new experience of him reveals ever new riches in him. Each great trial of his love and mercy shows them inexhaustible. The more we grow in his friend-

ship, the less we want any other consolation or support of joy in life. He is Alpha and Omega to us—our all in all.

It is his work now to draw us to this conception of our life, as a life whose significance will be revealed when it attains its fullness in him. He, being lifted, seeks to draw all men unto him. It is strange that believing what undoubtedly we do, he should find in us so much resistance; but the earthly self clings to the things of earth, and dies hard—dies harder than anything else. It remains distrustful and worrying, and will not abandon all, and taking his hand simply to go out whithersoever he shall lead. He rightly stressed in his earthly life the virtue of faith as the fundamental virtue, showing thereby his complete comprehension of our nature in its weakness and its need. Our ever-recurring failure is just there, in faith; in that utter trust and self-committal to our Lord's will and guiding that offers no opposition to his drawing. We break down again and again at the critical moment when he was about to lead us on to new knowledge of his love and care. I say it is a failure of faith, and yet, perhaps not altogether. We may, at least, say the failure of a certain quality of faith—a failure of faith's courage. We believe in our Lord and we believe, too, that he has hitherto led us, but when he calls us to come

nearer, to launch out into the deep and meet the unknown, courage fails. We do not want to hold back, but the known and the familiar cling about us and cry out to us not to leave them. There is so little courage in our following of our Lord! It is pitiful to see the souls that cling to the lower levels, not because they do not believe the saints' reports of the joys of the heights, but because they simply lack the courage to go up. You have seen the child, eager to follow where his father has gone, over the rough places, across the narrow plank that bridges the stream but holding back in sheer terror of the untried, fearing to trust his strength. Fearing to trust *our* strength—that is the trouble; and forgetting that it is just our strength that we are not to trust, but the strength of our Lord himself. Are you fearful? Are you fearful that the strength will not hold to the end of the course? Are you afraid to leave all on this bank and go across the stream to meet him? Afraid that the sacrifice which he will ask will be more than you can make? Afraid that you will lose what you most value if you yield yourself utterly to him?

Nay, deal not thus timidly and grudgingly with our Lord. Find the courage to put yourself wholly, unreservedly in his hands. He is your Alpha and Omega; all that you can hope for or wish is in him. Whatever has permanency, is unvanishing.



is there. Lay up all your treasures there. Nothing is lost that is consecrated in him. You shall find all there one day; all your hallowed affections, all your pure ideals of life, which you feel that you have only partially attained here.

There is so much that is only begun here, which seems to die without bearing any fruit. But we shall find the fruit in him, ripe and waiting. And we shall find more—more beyond all hope and all dreams: for we shall find him, the faithful and true. “I am he that shall be.” What shall he be to us through all eternity! In all those ages when we shall see him face to face and know even as we are known! If we once gain any vision of him shall we not think that all the discipline of life is but a small thing so we may win Christ? Be you but his now, and he shall be yours forever. Find his love here, in the day of this life, and it will never leave you or fail you.

How infinite and sweet, Thou everywhere  
And all-abounding Love, Thy service is!  
Thou liest an ocean round my world of care,  
My petty every day; and fresh and fair  
Pour Thy strong tides through all my crevices,  
Until the silence ripples into prayer.

That Thy full glory may abound, increase,  
And so Thy likeness shall be formed in me,  
I pray; the answer is not rest or peace,

But charges, duties, wants, anxieties,  
Till there seems room for everything but Thee,  
And never time for anything but these.

And I should fear, but lo! amid the press,  
The whirl and hum and pressure of the day,  
I hear Thy garments sweep, Thy seamless dress,  
And close beside my work and weariness  
Discern Thy gracious form, not far away,  
But very near, O Lord, to help and bless.

The busy fingers fly, the eyes may see  
Only the glancing needle that they hold,  
But all my life is blossoming inwardly,  
And every breath is like a litany,  
While through each labor, like a thread of gold,  
Is woven the sweet consciousness of Thee.













